AKRASIA AND MORAL EDUCATION

Roger Ralph Straughan

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University of London,
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ABSTRACT

Recent approaches to moral education have tended to emphasise the development of moral reasoning rather than the performance of moral actions. The logical relationship between the formation of moral judgments and their translation into action, however, cannot be ignored within the context of moral education; but equally it cannot be fully and properly explored in isolation from wider, philosophical issues. Akrasia, or "weakness of will", has generated a cluster of classic, philosophical problems concerning whether it is possible for a man to fail to do what he sincerely believes he ought to do (given the ability and opportunity), and how apparent examples of this phenomenon should be interpreted and explained.

The denial of the logical possibility of akrasia, as represented by the arguments of Socrates and Hare, is considered in Chapter II and found to be unconvincing. The concepts of "ought" and of "conscience" are analysed in Chapter III and shown to possess features which provide sufficient grounds for believing that akrasia both can and does occur. More precise criteria for akrasia are proposed in Chapter IV, and a number of common explanations are examined in the light of these criteria. A particular interpretation of akrasia is developed in Chapter V as a special case of doing x rather than y because one wants to do x rather than y, and three central, explanatory features of akrasia are picked out, involving dishonesty, language and immediacy.

Finally this analysis and interpretation is applied to

the particular concerns of moral education. Children as well as adults are shown to be capable of akrasia; various general approaches to and specific methods of "teaching morality" are reviewed as possible means of combatting akrasia in children; and the three explanatory factors are used to suggest ways in which children may be encouraged to act upon their moral judgments.

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My initial interest in the philosophical aspects of moral education (and indeed in most matters philosophical) was aroused by the work and teaching of Professor Richard Peters, and his indirect influence upon the methodology and content of this thesis has been considerable.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MORAL EDUCATION AND AKRASIA

This introductory chapter will attempt to identify the particular educational problem to be investigated in this study, and to indicate the broader philosophical context within which it is located. The conceptual distinction between moral training and moral education will first be used to illustrate the judgmental and behavioural aspects of morality and of moral education (1 - 3), and Wilson's analysis of these aspects will be briefly considered (4). Failure to act upon one's moral judgments and beliefs (akrasia) will then be shown to constitute, prima facie, a necessary concern of moral education (5). Finally, the differing degrees of importance which moral educationists appear to attach to the problem of akrasia will be taken to suggest that the relationship between judgment and action within moral education cannot be discussed in isolation from the wider philosophical issues which akrasia raises (6).

1. Training and Education

The reasons why certain concepts at certain times come into fashion or go out of it present an interesting field of study. The concepts of "training" and"education" are a case in point, and a recent analysis has examined the apparent trend away from the former and towards the latter.[1] Teacher training colleges have become colleges of education, physical training (P.T.) has become physical education, and moral (or "character") training has become moral education; a similar emphasis upon

education rather than training, instructing or informing can be noted in the fields of religion, art and sex.

Peters has argued that "'trained' suggests the development of competence in a limited skill or mode of thought whereas 'educated' suggests a linkage with a wider system of beliefs", and he goes on to apply this distinction to some of the examples just mentioned, e.g. "'Physical training' suggests merely disciplining the body in relation to a narrowly conceived end such as physical fitness; 'physical education' suggests the cultivation of physical fitness as a necessary foundation for a balanced way of life."[2]

A thorough examination of the distinction and all its implications would be lengthy and at this stage unnecessary. It will suffice to note that "training" certainly seems to be directed towards more "limited" ends than does "education", but this raises further questions as to just how "limited" an end has to be, and in what way, for it to suggest "training" rather than "education". Peters proposes at various points that "limited" could imply "specific ends", "specialised skills" and "circumscribed moves".

An important feature of such "limited ends", not directly mentioned by Peters, is that they are quantifiable; they can be tested and evaluated with a fair degree of precision. The success or failure of "training" can thus be determined much more easily than the success or failure of "education"; it is much easier to test whether or not a child can do a forward roll than to test whether or not he conceives "the cultivation of physical fitness as a necessary foundation

for a balanced way of life".

The conceptual swing from "training" to "education" therefore suggests, among other things, a greater degree of difficulty in evaluating the achievement or non-achievement of aims and objectives, and consequently also in identifying particular factors that may determine that achievement or non-achievement. This is a major problem in the area of moral education.

2. Moral Training and Moral Education

The significance of the swing from "training" to "education" and the reasons for it will vary according to the particular area of learning, although some general factors may also be involved. The conceptual swing from moral training to moral education, however, reflects current thinking about the transmission of morality to the young, and should be viewed in the light of work by developmental psychologists on how children develop morally. Some of this work will be examined in some detail later, but its main emphases must be outlined at this point.

The principles of developmental psychology have been found to have applications in many areas of learning, including morality. Piaget's pioneer work in 1932[3] has been built upon by Kohlberg in recent years,[4] and developmental questions are now generally considered to be of central importance in moral learning.

Studies of moral development have tended to concentrate upon children's moral judgments rather than their actions. The

level of thinking displayed in a moral-conflict situation, the degree of "moral maturity" achieved and the type of reason given to justify a decision supply the main criteria for moral development. These criteria are "judgmental" rather than "behavioural"; they refer to levels of cognitive functioning rather than to such factors as conformity to rules, resistance to temptation or the feeling of guilt.

Developmentalists therefore see moral development (and consequently moral education) to be concerned primarily with the form or structure of moral thinking, rather than with specific content of belief or action; it is not what the child does or believes that matters so much as why he thinks he ought to do it. Further support for this view was supplied by the work of Hartshorne and May who apparently demonstrated the unreliability of behavioural criteria, which they claimed showed little consistency and were largely determined by particular "situational" pressures.[5]

The developmentalists' emphasis upon reasoning and judgment rather than overt behaviour can also claim some philosophical support. For an action to count as "moral", it is not normally thought sufficient that it should merely conform to some overt, behavioural norm, for bodily movements are open to differing interpretations; handing over money may be an act of generosity or charity, or of bribery and corruption, depending upon the reasons, intentions and judgments underlying the behaviour. "Judgmental" rather than "behavioural" criteria can therefore be argued to be the more useful in distinguishing between what is "moral", "non-moral" and "immoral"; and even

within the "judgmental" zone, the developmentalists' concern for the form rather than the particular content of moral thinking finds support from those philosophers who wish to characterise moral reasoning and judgments in purely "formal" terms (e.g. that they are "prescriptive" and "universalizable").[6]

These brief references to psychological and philosophical accounts of moral behaviour will be expanded and discussed at greater length later, but they have been mentioned at this point because of their connection with the conceptual swing from moral training to moral education. The developmental emphasis upon levels of thinking, forms of reasoning and the making of judgments, when considered alongside the philosophical emphasis upon the agent's reasons and intentions and upon the formal characteristics of moral reasoning, suggests that morality is a more suitable subject for education than for training. Training is directed towards relatively stereo-typed responses, but to act morally (as outlined above) cannot be defined in terms of such responses, for it is to act for reasons which imply Peters' "linkage with a wider system of beliefs".

The conceptual swing from moral training to moral education has also been associated with changes in the aims and methods of moral teaching, particularly in schools. Methodological questions will be examined in depth in Chapter VI, and at this point it merely needs to be noted that traditional conceptions of moral training, aimed at the "limited end" of inculcating a specific code of moral conduct (e.g. telling the truth, being polite, playing one's hardest for the school, etc.)

have largely given way to an approach which focusses upon developing ("educationally") an understanding of moral reasoning. This latter approach considers that moral education is concerned with teaching the form of moral thinking rather than a particular content of moral beliefs and behaviour; indeed the child's overt behaviour gives little indication as to whether or not he is "morally educated".

A good example of the influence exerted by the psychological (and to a lesser extent the philosophical) accounts outlined above upon programmes and recommendations for practical teaching is provided by the Canadian Mackay Report on "Religious Information and Moral Development",[7] which leans heavily upon Kohlberg's developmental framework for its theoretical backing. The following extracts clearly illustrate the "judgmental", "non-behavioural" emphases of the Report:

(i) "... we equate ... character development ... with development of the ability to reason morally ..." (p.42)

(ii) "... a person's morality is primarily a measure of his ability to make moral judgments ... In our opinion, then, it is the formal character or moral point of view of a particular judgment which is important rather than its content. It is not the decision reached in a given situation that matters so much as the process of arriving at that decision." (pp. 44-45)

(iii) "... he (Kohlberg) is wisely focussing our attention on how young people think rather than on how they behave." (p. 46)

(iv) "Another great fault in seeking to influence behaviour rather than the underlying process of moral reasoning is that it leads to the establishment of absolute values ..." (p. 47)

(v) "It is not the conclusion arrived at that should concern us; it is the method of reasoning that leads to it." (p. 67)[8]

The Report, then, clearly illustrates an approach to moral learning and moral education, the psychological history of which can be traced back at least to Piaget, who in 1932 stated unequivocally in his influential study, "The Moral Judgment of the Child":

> "Readers will find in this book no direct analysis of child morality as it is practised in home and school life, or in children's societies. It is the moral judgment that we propose to investigate, not moral behaviour or sentiments." 9

3. Objections to the "Judgmental" Account of Moral Education

The implications of the conceptual swing from moral training to moral education, and in particular the emphasis now placed upon developing the form of moral reasoning rather than teaching specific beliefs or training specific modes of behaviour, are open to criticism at both a theoretical and a practical level.

(a) The theoretical framework which developmental psychologists have provided for moral education has little in common with the models of morality and of moral learning proposed by behaviourists such as Skinner, who seek to deny the importance of "mentalistic phenomena", like beliefs and intentions, in all areas of human life including that of morality.

Skinner's "scientific conception of man", for example, minimises "man's vaunted creative powers, his original accomplishments in art, science and morals, his capacity to choose, and our right to hold him responsible for the consequences of his choice,"[10] for the behaviourist approach "carries us beyond awkward or inaccessible 'principles', 'factors', and so on, to

variables which can be directly manipulated."[11]

"Judgmental" accounts of morality and moral education are thus both irrelevant and unhelpful: "concepts of choice, responsibility, justice and so on ... carry a heavy semantic cargo ... which obscures any attempt to clarify controlling practices or to improve techniques."[12] A person acts morally, according to Skinner, not "because he knows or feels that his behaviour is right, (but) because of the contingencies which have shaped his behaviour and created the conditions he feels."[13]

On this view, therefore, both the study and the encouragement of moral behaviour should concentrate upon the behaviour itself, the "contingencies" which have produced it, and the techniques by which it can be further modified, rather than upon levels of principled reasoning, choosing, judging and deciding and other "inaccessible", mentalistic furniture of the "inner man".

(b) The theoretical objections of behaviourism are reinforced to some extent by certain, practical, "common sense" beliefs about morality, to the effect that it is <u>action</u> that counts in moral matters, not the levels of reasoning and justification that may or may not lie behind it. Such beliefs find expression in the sayings, "Actions speak louder than words", and "Practise what you preach!" and also in the advice offered in the Sermon on the Mount - "By their fruits ye shall know them."[14] They are also often associated with a mistrust of intellectualism and ethical disputation on the one hand, and with a dislike of hypocrisy and insincerity on the other.

Where moral education or training is concerned, what matters on this view is that children should be taught or made to "behave properly". Levels of judgment and quality of reasoning are all very well, but it is what the child *does* that ultimately counts. New courses may be introduced in schools, aimed at getting children to *discuss* moral questions, but it is standards of *behaviour* (in and out of school) which signify the success or failure of moral teaching.

The relative strengths and weaknesses of the "judgmental" and "behavioural" accounts of morality need not be examined in detail at this point, as the relationship between judgment and behaviour in morality and moral learning will be a constantly recurring theme throughout this study. For the moment it will suffice to note that the "behavioural" account does make, by implication at least, an important logical point.

Granted that a child has learned to satisfy certain "judgmental" criteria for moral reasoning, this is not sufficient to demonstrate the success of moral teaching with that child, for he may fail to *act* upon the judgment which he has formed. "The capacity to make moral judgments is not at all the same thing as moral behaviour," maintains Williams. "It has yet to be shown that there is a high correlation between the two things."[15] In other words, there is (prima facie) no reason to suppose that a child or adult may not at times judge and believe that he ought to do x, thereby revealing perhaps considerable "moral maturity" in arriving at this judgment and belief, yet then deliberately fail to do x. Such a person could hardly claim to have acted morally or to be morally educated.

It appears, then, that both "judgmental" and "behavioural" criteria must be met before a person can be said to have acted morally and before moral education can be said to have succeeded. Any account of morality or of moral education must consider both types of criteria, and one recent account which attempts to do this will now be looked at in order to illustrate further the issues with which this study will be concerned.

4. Wilson's Account of the Morally Educated Person

In his contribution to the first publication of the Farmington Trust Research Unit, "Introduction to Moral Education", Wilson echoes several of the points mentioned in 2. Moral behaviour, he argues, is not a matter of "going through the motions"; it is concerned with particular types of intention, reason, motive, disposition and procedural principle. These provide the tests of a morally educated person: "We wished to avoid giving an account of the morally educated person in terms of content, and hence began with the questions, 'What is it to be "good at" morality?', 'What counts as being reasonable ... in the moral sphere?' etc. We hoped to find certain skills, abilities or other characteristics which defined the morally educated person."[16]

Wilson goes on to attempt "something like a phenomenological description of morality, which can be broken down into a number of components, each of which has some chance of being assessed in neutral terms." The components suggested are as follows:-

"a) PHIL refers to the degree to which one can identify with other people, in the sense of being such that other people's feelings and interests actually count or weigh with one, or are accepted as of equal validity to one's own ...

b) EMP refers to awareness or insight into one's own and other people's feelings: i.e. the ability to know what those feelings are and describe them correctly. A distinction might be drawn between self-awareness (AUTEMP) and awareness of others (ALLEMP) ...

c) GIG refers to the mastery of factual knowledge ...

d) DIK refers to the rational formulation of EMP and GIG, on the basis of PHIL, into a set of rules or moral principles to which the individual commits himself, by the use of such universalising words as 'good', 'right', etc. where these rules relate to other people's interests ...

e) PHRON refers to the rational formulation of rules and principles (whether we call them moral or not) relating to one's own life and interests ...

f) KRAT refers to the ability to translate DIK or PHRON principles into action: to live up to one's moral or prudential principles. (One could distinguish between DIKRAT and PHRONKRAT if required. A person might be very conscientious towards other people but show a good deal of 'akrasia' or weakness of will about himself.)"[17]

These components are to be understood "in the sense of logical components, one might say, a set of attributes of the morally educated person. They are not psychological components, or specific psychological skills or abilities."[18]

In his more recent work Wilson has refined and elaborated his list of components, subdividing them into more specific categories while retaining his original, basic analytic structure. Thus, KRAT (which is of particular relevance to this study) is broken down into:-

"KRAT (1) (RA): Being, in practice, 'relevantly alert' to (noticing) moral situations, and seeing them as such (describing them in terms of PHIL, etc.)

KRAT (1) (TT): Thinking thoroughly about such situations, and bringing to bear whatever PHIL, EMP and GIG one has.

KRAT (1) (OPU): As a result of the foregoing, making an overriding, prescriptive and universalised decision to act in others' interests.

KRAT (2): Being sufficiently whole-hearted, free from unconscious counter-motivation, etc. to carry out (when able) the above decision in practice."[19]

Wilson's later work also removes certain difficulties implicit in his earlier account. In particular, despite his insistence that he is attempting to list logical, not psychological, components, he still refers to KRAT in his original analysis as the ability to translate principles into action, influenced perhaps by his emphasis upon "moral skills" which enable one to become "good at" morality. But if KRAT, the function of which is to close the "gap between decision and action",[20] is describable as an "ability", there can be no certainty that the gap will be closed, for a person with this "ability" may not wish or choose or decide to use it; a further component would be needed to ensure that the "ability" is utilised, and this could not be described as a further "ability" without involving an infinite regress. However, in his later analyses Wilson enters an explicit caveat against "ambiguously specify (ing) this component as an 'attainment', or that as an 'ability' ... "[21] and describes the various types of KRAT (above) in terms of things which the morally educated person does (e.g. noticing, thinking thoroughly, making a 'proper' decision, and taking action.)[22]

Wilson's components will be referred to at various points in this study, and his analysis of KRAT will be accorded particular attention. His work has been mentioned at this point to exemplify an account of morality and of moral education

which pays regard to both "judgmental" and "behavioural" criteria, and which acknowledges the possibility of failing to act upon one's moral judgments and decisions: " ... it is both logically and empirically possible for S to make a sincere and genuine decision and not to carry it out even though he could do so."[23]

5. KRAT and Akrasia

So far it has been argued that the conceptual swing from moral training to moral education has been associated with an emphasis upon the "judgmental" aspects of morality, though Wilson by including KRAT in his list of moral components has drawn attention to the truism that both morality and moral education require principles and judgments to be translated into action. A closer examination of KRAT and of the relationship between moral judgment and moral action therefore appears to be needed in order on the one hand to clarify the logical framework of moral behaviour and on the other to suggest some possible answers to practical problems concerning moral education. Such an investigation offers a promising area for philosophical research on at least two grounds.

Firstly, the analysis which Wilson offers "as a reasonable basis for future research"[24] needs more detailed and concentrated work on the individual components. There may well turn out to be important links of various kinds between some of the components which he describes, but that does not minimise the value of attempting an examination in depth of any one of

them. It is moreover at least arguable that KRAT is both logically and empirically central to morality and moral education (in so far as it brings together both the "judgmental" and "behavioural" aspects) in a way in which the other components are not, and that it accordingly merits particular attention, including that of the philosopher.

Secondly, any examination of the logical status and nature of KRAT cannot avoid reference to the philosophical problem of akrasia, or weakness of will, which has been the subject of philosophical debate from Socrates to the present day. The implications of this problem for moral teaching and moral education, however, have been largely ignored and thus present a field of study that is both unexplored and also of considerable educational and philosophical importance. Educationally, akrasia (i.e. lack of KRAT) appears to signify some kind of failure in moral education, and by examining the nature of this failure moral educators may be able to discover ways of combatting it. Philosophically, the relationship between akrasia and moral education has recently been noted by Mortimore in his introduction to a collection of papers on "Weakness of Will"; pinpointing various areas in which further work needs to be done, he concludes:

"Finally, how would (various) ways of conceiving of weakness of will affect our ways of teaching morality? Are our current ways of teaching strength of will misguided, or do they just need to be redescribed?"[25]

It is with these and similar questions that this study will be mainly concerned, but it cannot be safely assumed at the

outset that akrasia, or weakness of will, does constitute a genuine problem of some kind for moral philosophers and for moral educators. The following chapter will therefore consider some attempts by philosophers to deny the logical possibility of akrasia, while the final section of this introductory chapter will illustrate the conflicting views within moral education on the importance of akrasia.

6. Moral Education and Akrasia

It has already been shown how Wilson, by including KRAT among his "moral components", acknowledges that weakness of will or a failure to translate one's principles, beliefs or decisions into action can constitute a problem for moral education. Not all writers on moral education, however, assign this degree of importance to akrasia, while some do not consider it to be a problem at all.

The Schools Council Project in Moral Education, under the leadership of McPhail, for example, presents a different picture of morality and of moral education from that of the Farmington Trust. The Project members in their book, "Moral Education in the Secondary School", maintain throughout that "an individual's considerate style of life is productive of happiness and health for that individual because it earns acceptance and supporting feedback, because it reduces stress."[26] Virtue may be its own reward, but in addition "When boys and girls adopt a considerate style of life, not only do others benefit but they themselves gain in a number of important ways."[27] An alternative view of morality is described as "perverted":-

> "A particularly destructive feature of some German rationalist and western protestant thinking has been the notion that to be moral it must hurt; that the more bitter the medicine the more beneficial the draught; that no decision qualifies as moral unless I am not disposed to make it or carry it out." [28]

Important practical implications stem from the Project's belief that "the main motive for treating others with consideration is ... because such behaviour is pleasant in itself and can be rewarding."[29] In particular, the possible gap between judgment and action and the possible conflict between obligation and inclination are minimised, at times almost to vanishing point. The "Lifeline" materials, produced by the Project, concentrate exclusively upon presenting pupils with hypothetical situations of varying degrees of complexity for the purposes of discussion and decision-making. Yet, as I have argued elsewhere,[30] the Project fails to acknowledge any possible discrepancy between the pupil's hypothetical "decision" and an inclination to act otherwise when faced with a similar situation in real life. An excellent example of this tendency to blur the dividing line between judgment and action, and between hypothetical and real-life situations, is to be found in the Project's comments on the "Sensitivity" unit of the "Lifeline" material, designed "to encourage suggestions about what to do which will in turn be considered and rejected, modified or adopted by others so that they and the proposer learn to be more sensitive to individuals' needs, interests and feelings."[31] A warning is given to guard against:-

> "... the feeling of euphoria which came over the Moral Education Curriculum Project team when they found that, after a three-month trial period in 1969, 300 boys and girls who had been using 'Sensitivity' showed a 50 per cent increase in the number of points relevant to others'

> needs, interests and feelings in ten situations which they recorded in a written test when compared with the members of a control group which had not used the material." [32] (my italics)

Yet the very next sentence draws the following unargued conclusion:- "Without doubt work of this kind can produce improvements in behaviour as well as in attitude ..."[33] (my italics). Unless "improvements in behaviour" are meant to refer to higher scoring in written tests, the Project seems to have no justification for this extravagant claim and to have fallen prey to its own euphoria.

The question of which teaching methods are likely to prove most effective in countering akrasia will be considered in detail in the final chapter, following a full examination of the philosophical problems surrounding akrasia. The Schools Council Project has been mentioned at this early stage in order to demonstrate how a discussion of moral education and its teaching methodology cannot help but reflect a particular view of morality and of the nature and relative importance of the distinction between moral judgment and moral action.

It would be historically and philosophically short-sighted to gloss over these differing views, attributing them wholly to the individual idiosyncracies of particular educationists who have participated in the relatively recent debate about "moral education"; questions about the relationship between judgment and action in moral education cannot be treated in isolation from the much wider network of philosophical issues which surrounds the problem of akrasia, or weakness of will. It may well be, therefore, that the differences between the

"moral educationists", Wilson and McPhail, represent fundamentally different ways in which separate traditions of moral philosophy have conceived of akrasia. The following chapter will examine these differing conceptions, including two accounts which seem to result in a complete denial of the logical possibility of akrasia.

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CHAPTER II - IS AKRASIA A PROBLEM?

It was stated in the last chapter that we generally accept it to be possible for a person to fail deliberately to do (or not do) what he judges ought (or ought not) to be done; this is one, but by no means the only, possible formulation of what "akrasia" consists in. (Other formulations will be considered in Chapter IV).

Philosophers, however, have differed in the degree of emphasis placed upon the possible conflict between what a person feels he ought to do and what he feels inclined to do, and upon the possible resulting gap between judgment and action. Some indeed have gone so far as to maintain that if a person really believes that he ought to do x, he cannot (logically) fail to do x or attempt to do x. These arguments must be examined in detail, for clearly if akrasia cannot occur, it will present no problems for moral education or for anything else.

The strategy of this chapter, therefore, will be firstly to outline two philosophical traditions which disagree over the importance and extent of akrasia as an ethical problem, and secondly to explore in greater depth the accounts of two particular philosophers, Socrates and Hare, who have in different ways both attempted to deny the logical possibility of akrasia.

1. Two Philosophical Traditions

The two conflicting philosophical traditions may be labelled, for convenience, the "competitive" and the "conformist" viewpoints. The following review will attempt to pick out the

main features of these two traditions, but a full-scale, historical genealogy is not necessary to the development of the argument. Furthermore, even where an individual philosopher is referred to, the purpose will be to illustrate a particular characteristic of one or other tradition rather than to categorise that philosopher as a typical representative of that tradition; indeed, in the case of a number of philosophers (e.g. Plato, Aristotle, Kant) traces of both traditions can be detected, suggesting that the dividing line is not always clear-cut.

A. The Competitive Tradition

This tradition has already been implicitly invoked in Chapter I by references to "failure to translate one's principles into action" and to "conflict between obligation and inclination". The label "competitive" has been chosen to emphasise the central feature of this tradition: moral behaviour is seen essentially as a struggle, an effort, an arena of conflict; moral duties, obligations and ideals represent standards and goals which are, because of the nature of morality and of man, difficult to attain.

The competing or conflicting elements may be variously described. The scene of the struggle, for instance, is frequently set within the nature of man itself. Plato has been responsible for initiating an influential strand of the tradition which portrays man's "soul" as being radically divided into separate and opposed elements. In most versions of this account "reason", representing moral awareness, confronts "inclination",

"emotion", or "appetite". The outcome of the ensuing struggle is determined either by the respective strengths of the individual elements, or in some versions by the intervention or non-intervention of a further contestant (or perhaps referee) - the "will". The person who fails to do what he believes he ought to do is thus lacking or defective in certain natural components of his make-up: either his "reason" is too weak to overrule his "inclination" etc. or his "will" is too weak to ensure that the dictates of reason prevail. Such accounts, couched in the language of strife and contest, attempt to provide not merely evidence for the existence of akrasia but also an explanation for its existence. Their explanatory validity will be assessed later in Chapter IV, but for the moment it is sufficient to note the close logical connection between akrasia and the conception of the divided nature of man.

Other strands of the competitive tradition, while still stressing that man is inevitably subject to conflicting pressures in his moral life, tend to present the conflict as being between man's "nature" on the one hand (seen as a more cohesive unity) and the external demands of an objective and authoritative code of moral behaviour on the other.

Christian ethics provide one obvious example of this strand. Man's nature is fundamentally sinful, and without divine aid he is unable to know or to do what is right. An external moral authority (God) thus stands opposed to the deviant nature of man, offering both insight into what is right and the power to act upon that knowledge. Despite this external element, however, the notion of a "divided soul" is not wholly abandoned

for there still has to be some "higher" part of man's nature that is capable of seeking, apprehending and acknowledging the goodness of God's will. This somewhat paradoxical picture of human nature as totally debased yet able to respond to divine goodness is evident in Paul's famous description of akrasia:

> "... I know that nothing good lodges in me ... for though the will to do good is there, the deed is not. The good which I want to do I fail to do ... (and) when I want to do the right, only the wrong is within my reach ..."1

Paul here sees a wide gulf between moral judgment and action, or in his words between "the good will" and "the deed", which cannot be bridged by human efforts alone. His account of akrasia again contains a built-in explanation of the phenomenon, which will be considered in Chapter IV.

A second example of a predominantly "internal versus external" type of conflict is supplied by what might be called the "prinoiple" strand of the competitive tradition. Here morality is seen as a set of given principles which have to be applied interpretatively to particular situations and then acted upon. Moral behaviour thus becomes a two-stage process in which failure can occur at either stage - the "intellectual" stage, at which the principles are grasped in general terms and then seen to have application to a specific situation, and the "emotive" or "conative" stage, at which the agent makes the effort to act upon the interpreted principle.

The sharpness of the dichotomy which this model has created can be questioned on several grounds. It is difficult to see, for example, how the first stage of grasping a principle and seeing its application can have no "emotive" component; some form of moral "feeling" or "sensitivity" or "concern" must

be required for a person to acquire the principle that stealing is in general wrong, and to see that principle as applicable to a particular situation in which an opportunity is offered for shop-lifting. Also the sequential implications of the model - i.e. that moral behaviour consists in first acquiring principles and then putting them into practice - could suggest a misleading and over-simplified pattern of moral learning and development, a point which will be expanded in the final chapter. Nevertheless, the two-stage model has had a considerable influence upon views of morality both at the theoretical and the "common-sense" levels; it is, for example, detectable in Wilson's "moral components", of which KRAT seems to represent the secondary, "conative" stage, and the other components the primary, "intellectual" one.

The "external" element in this strand of the competitive tradition is provided by the "given principles". These principles inform us of what duty requires of us, and these requirements are frequently in opposition to our "internal" inclinations. Kant has been one of the most influential figures within this strand of the tradition, with his emphasis upon the conflict between duty and inclination. Duty presents itself as obedience to the Moral Law, which as formulated in the categorical imperative is binding upon all rational beings. Inclinations on the other hand are determined and so cannot be commanded, even if they are "moral" inclinations:

> "For love out of inclination cannot be commanded; but kindness done from duty - although no inclination impels us, and even although natural and unconquerable disinclination stands in our way - is practical, and not pathological love, residing in the will and not in the propensions of feeling, in principles of action and not of melting compassion; and it is this practical love alone which can be an object of command." [2] (author's italics)

The problems raised by Kant's apparent denial of all moral value to inclinations, even when these are not in conflict with the demands of duty, will not be pursued here. The main significance of his account for this brief review lies in the framework of moral concepts which his theory uses and presupposes - e.g. duty, inclination, law, binding, obligation, imperative, etc. Such concepts form much of the fabric of the competitive tradition, evoking as they do an image of an authoritative legislator issuing commands to a possibly recalcitrant subject. Two further concepts within the same framework and with similar implications are those of "ought" and of "conscience", which will be examined in detail in Chapter III.

This review has merely outlined the main strands of the competitive tradition. Many of the points mentioned will be taken up later in the study, particularly in Chapter III where an account of "ought" and of "conscience" will be developed in support of certain features of the competitive tradition. The main purpose of this outline has been to indicate the sort of theoretical moral framework into which akrasia most naturally fits. An alternative framework, however, can be described which accords akrasia far less prominence.

B. The Conformist Tradition

This, like the competitive tradition, consists of various strands, but the central characteristic in this case is that acting in conformity with moral requirements is seen essentially not as a struggle but as a natural and normal feature of human behaviour.

Certain versions of this tradition, if pushed to the extreme, may result (implicitly or explicitly) in a complete denial of the very existence of akrasia - for example, the accounts of Socrates (to the effect that no man ever willingly and knowingly does what is wrong) and of Hare (to the effect that the logic of moral language commits a man to doing what he sincerely believes he ought to do.) These two accounts will be the subject of the following two main sections, and so need not be commented upon here. A belief in the "original virtue" of human nature underlies a third version, wherein man and his first instincts are naturally good with the result that there is no inherent conflict between morality and human nature. Rousseau exemplifies this version well with his claim: "Let us lay it down as an incontestable principle that the first impulses of nature are always right. There is no original perversity in the human heart."[2]

The most obvious objection to such accounts as these is the straightforward, empirical one that it appears to be a fact of life that we do at times act against our moral beliefs, judgments and principles. Being tempted to do what we believe we ought not to do and at times succumbing to the temptation are not uncommon human experiences, and moral language has developed a number of concepts which reflect these experiences. These and other objections will be fully developed in the following sections on Socrates and Hare, and in Chapter III.

Less extreme versions of the conformist tradition, while not denying the possibility of akrasia and of moral struggle, seek to minimise in various ways the "competitive"

aspect of moral behaviour. One favoured line of approach has been to build into the notion of human nature a moral element, without going so far as to maintain that man's nature is wholly and innately virtuous.

Thus, Hume sees sympathy as a principle which operates universally in human nature and which "produces our sentiment of morals".[4] Man is therefore predisposed in favour of moral action, particularly that directed towards the "public good":-

> "It appears that a tendency to public good, and to the promoting of peace, harmony and order in society does always, by affecting the benevolent principles of our frame, engage us on the side of the social virtues."[5]

Why then do we ever fail to act virtuously? Because sympathy is but one element in human nature, and a fluctuating one at that: "We sympathise more with persons contiguous to us, than with persons remote from us; with our acquaintances than with strangers; with our countrymen, than with foreigners."[6] The significance for akrasia of this "contiguity" factor will be examined in Chapters V and VI.

Schopenhauer also exemplifies this strand of the conformist tradition with his account of the three basic motives in human nature - egoism, malice and compassion. Natural compassion, a "wholly direct and even instinctive participation in another's suffering,"[7] is said to be "inborn and indestructible in everyone, and ... the sole source of non-egoistic actions, to (which) moral worth exclusively belongs."[8] Moral actions then are necessarily those "sprung from compassion",[9] and the foundation of morality must reside in human nature itself, i.e. in its compassionate element. However, compassion is only one of the three basic motives, which "are present in everyone in different

and incredibly unequal proportions ... (and) in consequence of this incredibly great, inborn and original difference, everyone will be powerfully stirred by those motives to which he is predominantly susceptible."[10] (author's italics)

Both Hume and Schopenhauer, then, represent a strand of the conformist tradition which attributes to human nature a moral element which is universal and innate, but which does not necessarily dominate the other elements and thereby rule out the possibility of akrasia. Man's disposition nevertheless is seen as being basically towards rather than against moral behaviour, as is indicated by the universal approval which, it is claimed, is accorded to such behaviour.

This emphasis upon the "spectator appeal" of moral behaviour is an important feature of the conformist tradition, noted by several writers. According to Schopenhauer, for example, "Such (charitable) actions also stir within the spectator that characteristic assent, esteem, admiration, and even a humiliating glance at himself; this is an undeniable fact."[11] Similarly Kant, though in most respects more representative of the competitive tradition, claims in a footnote on moral instruction:-

> " ... when a righteous act is represented as being done with a steadfast mind in complete disregard of any advantage in this or in another world, and even under the greatest temptations of affliction or allurement, ... it uplifts the soul and rouses a wish that we too could act in this way. Even children of moderate age feel this impression ..."[12]

The versions of the conformist tradition so far described attempt to lessen or abolish the conflict between duty and inclination by ascribing a universal, intrinsically moral element to human nature itself. (Here's account does not fit

into this pattern, but will be analysed in detail later in this chapter.) Another strand of the tradition tries to avoid the obvious problems of empirical demonstration and verification inherent in such theories by concentrating upon the instrumental attractions of morality; if moral behaviour in some way brings its own reward, man will be inclined rather than disinclined to do what he believes he ought to do, and thus to acquire moral habits.

Aristotle's account of the temperate man and of moral learning is a locus classicus within this strand. The temperate man "does not find pleasure in the wrong things"[13]; he is one who "abstaining from bodily pleasures finds this abstinence pleasant."[14] The good man, then, gains his pleasure from good behaviour, and experiences no conflict between what is right and what is enjoyable. How does a man reach this enviable position? Not, according to Aristotle, as a result of innate virtue, for "none of the moral virtues is implanted in us by Nature,"[15] but as a result of habit. We acquire moral virtues by exercising them - "we become just by performing just actions."[16] Thus, "like activites produce like dispositions ... so it is a matter of real importance whether our early education confirms us in one set of habits or another."[17] Aristotle's remarks are clearly of considerable significance for moral education and will be examined in that context later, but it must also be noted at this point that as man, with his lack of innate virtue, still has somehow to be "confirmed" in the right habits, akrasia remains a problem at the early stages of moral development at least. (Aristotle's account of akrasia will be considered at

greater length in Chapter IV.)

Aristotle is at pains, then, to describe the pleasure which accrues directly and individually to the good man from acting morally, a point which is repeated by Schopenhauer who has affinities with this strand of the tradition also; charitable actions, he claims, "awaken in us that inward contentment called the good, satisfied, approving conscience,"[18] thus indicating that the notion of conscience is not the sole preserve of the competitive tradition.

Another instrumental view of moral behaviour has been advanced within the conformist tradition, this time based upon the social utility of morality rather than upon its direct rewards to the individual agent. Hume, for example, in the passage already quoted, refers to "a tendency to public good, and to the promoting of peace, harmony and order in society," though elsewhere he seems to deny that there is any "such passion in human minds as the love of mankind;"[18] instead man has created the "artificial" virtue of justice because of the overall, long-term benefits which result from e.g. respecting the property of others. Despite this apparent conflict, Hume illustrates in both of his accounts the main features of this "social utility" strand. Man benefits in various ways from living as a member of society, but that society can only be sustained if certain types of behaviour are adopted and others rejected. Truth-telling, promise-keeping, honesty and non-violence, for example, thus become not tedious moral duties with which individuals are reluctantly faced, but necessary conditions for the existence and survival of a form of social life whose advantages these individuals wish to enjoy.

Logically, therefore, man should be pre-disposed in favour of behaving in such a way (i.e. morally) as will help to secure his long-term wants (i.e. to live in a tolerable society). Again this argument does not completely deny the existence of akrasia in practice, for short-term and long-term wants may conflict; this problem will be considered in Chapter V.

Finally one further strand of the conformist tradition must be mentioned, which attempts to combine the individual and social consequences of moral behaviour. The individual's aim is here seen as "self-realisation", which is attainable only within a social framework of rules and relationships; moral behaviour thereby becomes not only individually self-fulfilling but also inextricably entwined with social requirements.

Bradley has produced an elaborate exposition of this theory, which also echoes other themes of the conformist tradition already noted. The intrinsic end of morality is the realisation of the whole self, which consists of two elements:

> " ... these are myself as the will of this or that self, and again the universal will as the will for good; and this latter I feel to be my true self, and desire my other self to be subordinated to and so identified with it; in which case I feel the satisfaction of an inward realisation." [20]

The content of morality is however, for Bradley, socially prescribed by the demands of "my station and its duties:"

> " To be moral, I must will my station and its duties ... There I realise myself morally, so that not only what ought to be in the world is, but I am what I ought to be, and find so my contentment and satisfaction." [21]

Thus, "in the community is the individual realised,"[22] and the community is "the real moral organism."[23]

Bradley's metaphysical and obscure account of the self

and society cannot be further investigated here; nor can his questionable premise that an individual's social role can sufficiently specify his moral duties. What can be noted, however, is his interlinking of the individual and social elements of the conformist tradition, and also his affinity to Aristotle in applying his moral theory to the question of moral learning and education, and in underlining the importance of habit in these processes:

> "The child is taught to will a content which is universal and good, and he learns to identify his will with it, so that he feels pleasure when he feels himself in accord with it, uneasiness or pain when his will is contrary thereto, and he feels that it is contrary. This is the beginning of personal morality ... [24]

> "Or, to repeat it, in education my self by habituation has been growing into one with the good self around me, and by my free acceptance of my lot hereafter I consciously make myself one with the good, so that, though bad habits cling to and even arise in me, yet I cannot but be aware of myself as the reality of the good will." [25]

The educational implications of both Aristotle's and Bradley's accounts will be reviewed in the final chapter.

The conformist tradition, therefore, as outlined in this section, appears to be more diverse than the contrasting, competitive tradition. It attempts to lessen the possible conflict between duty and inclination (and thereby the prominence of akrasia as a theoretical and practical problem), either by assigning an inbuilt "moral" element to human nature, or by laying weight upon the individual and/or social benefits of moral behaviour.

This brief survey of the two traditions should serve to broaden our perspective when considering differences of

approach in the modern debate on moral education. It is logically impossible to discuss moral education without at the same time raising, directly or indirectly, questions about the nature of morality itself. Writers on moral education cannot then avoid identifying themselves to some extent with particular standpoints within ethical theory, and the work of Wilson and McPhail already cited clearly reflects the disagreement between two ethical traditions over the relationship between moral judgment and action. Differences in ethical theory must therefore exercise an influence over recommendations for moral education.

This study will not attempt to establish the supremacy of one of the above traditions over the other. Various elements from both traditions will be drawn upon throughout the study, and it will in fact be argued that each makes a significant contribution to an understanding of moral education, the competitive tradition providing the more accurate description of the logic and language of morality while the conformist tradition perhaps offers more suggestive insights into the processes of moral learning and development.

It would, however, be both premature and arbitrary to proceed further without paying due consideration to certain important philosophical arguments which maintain that akrasia does not and cannot occur, and so constitutes neither a theoretical nor a practical problem. Accordingly, the arguments of Socrates and Hare will now be presented and analysed in some detail, the aim being not merely to counter these particular arguments, but also to draw from the analyses points which will later be

developed, firstly into a more general defence of the logical possibility of akrasia (Chapter III), and secondly into an account of the explanatory problems which surround the phenomenon (Chapters IV and V).

2. The Socratic Argument

A. Summary of the Argument

The question of akrasia is raised in a number of the Platonic dialogues, but the fullest statement of the problem occurs in the Protagoras;[26] this will now be summarised. The contributions of other dialogues and also some views of Aristotle will be mentioned in connection with the main issues raised by the Protagoras argument. To what extent the arguments in these dialogues should be attributed to Socrates or to Plato is a question which will need some consideration later, but for the moment it will be assumed that they emanate from Socrates.

In the Protagoras Socrates describes the common view of akrasia:-

> "(Most men) maintain that there are many who recognise the best but are unwilling to act upon it. It may be open to them, but they do otherwise. Whenever I ask what can be the reason for this, they answer that those who act in this way are overcome by pleasure or pain or some other of the things I mentioned just now (i.e. passion, pain, love and fear) ... " (352 C-D)

He goes on to consider what might be meant by "being overcome by pleasure":-

> "We take it that you say this happens to you when, for example, you are overcome by the desire of food or drink or sex - which are pleasant things - and though you recognise them as evil, nevertheless indulge in them ... In what respect do you call them evil? ... Can we expect any answer other than this, that they are not evil on account of the actual momentary pleasure which they produce, but

> on account of their consequences, disease and the rest? ... So the only reason why these pleasures seem to you to be evil is, we suggest, that they result in pains and deprive us of future pleasures." (353C - 354A)

Socrates then considers the converse proposition that pains may be good:-

> "Are they good for any other reason than that their outcome is pleasure and the cessation or prevention of pain? Can you say that you have any other end in mind, when you call them good, than pleasures or pain?" (354 B - C)

The conclusion then is that evil can be identified with pain, and good with pleasure:-

> "Then your idea of evil is pain, and of good is pleasure. Even enjoying yourself you call evil whenever it leads to the loss of a pleasure greater than its own, or lays up pains that outweighs its pleasures ... Isn't it the same when we turn to pain? To suffer pain you call good when it either rids us of greater pains than its own or leads to pleasures that outweigh them ..." (354 C - D)

Socrates then refers back to the common view of akrasia:-

> "This position makes your argument ridiculous. You say that a man often recognises evil actions as evil, yet commits them, under no compulsion, because he is led on and distracted by pleasure, and on the other hand that, recognising the good, he refrains from following it because he is overcome by the pleasures of the moment. The absurdity of this will become evident if we stop using all these names together - pleasant, painful, good and evil - and since they have turned out to be only two, call them by only two names - first of all good and evil, and only at a different stage pleasure and pain. Having agreed on this, suppose we now say that a man does evil though he recognises it as evil. Why? Because he is overcome. By what? We can no longer say by pleasure, because it has changed its name to good. Overcome, we say. By what, we are asked. By the good, I suppose we shall say. I fear that if our questioner is ill-mannered, he will laugh and retort, What ridiculous nonsense, for a man to do evil, knowing it is evil and that he ought not to do it, because he is overcome by good." (355 A - D)

It follows then that practical decisions require a correct estimation of the pleasures and pains that are likely to result:-

"So like an expert in weighing, put the pleasures and pains together, set both the near and distant in the balance, and say which is the greater quantity." (356 B)

Socrates then considers how we are able to make this kind of estimation:-

"Since our salvation in life has turned out to lie in the correct choice of pleasure and pain - more or less, greater or smaller, nearer or more distant - is it not in the first place a question of measurement, consisting as it does in a consideration of relative excess, defect or equality? ... And if so, it must be a special skill or branch of knowledge." (357 A - B)

It is then agreed that:-

"... when people make a wrong choice of pleasures and pains - that is of good and evil - the cause of their mistake is lack of knowledge ... So that is what 'being mastered by pleasure' really is - ignorance." (357 D - E)

The argument is then summed up as follows:-

"All actions aimed at this end, namely a pleasant and painless life, must be fine actions, that is good and beneficial ... Then if the pleasant is the good, no one who either knows or believes that there is another possible course of action, better than the one he is following, will ever continue on his present course when he might choose the better ... Then it must follow that no one willingly goes to meet evil or what he thinks to be evil. To make for what one believes to be evil, instead of making for the good, is not, it seems, in human nature, and when faced with the choice of two evils no one will choose the greater when he might choose the less." (358 B-D)

B. Critique of the Argument

Any examination of the Socratic argument that "no one willingly goes to meet evil" needs to consider two basic elements in that argument, firstly Socrates' attempted identification of "good" with "pleasant" and of "evil" with "painful", and secondly his view of "ignorance" and "knowledge". These two elements will now be reviewed in turn.

(i) The attempted identification of "good" with "pleasant" and of "evil" with "painful"

It is clear that Socrates' argument against "the common view of akrasia" (that there are many who recognise the good but are unwilling to pursue it because they are overcome by pleasure) is wholly dependent upon this identification. But what exactly is Socrates arguing against when he makes the identification? Initially at least, he is arguing not against the possibility that there are many who recognise the good but are unwilling to pursue it, but against the explanation that is commonly offered for this phenomenon, namely that they are overcome by pleasure. If Socrates' identification is accepted, this particular explanation (though not the others also mentioned, i.e. being overcome by pain or passion or love or fear) becomes self-contradictory and absurd.

Santas argues this point convincingly in an important paper on the Protagoras:- "... it is the statement, 'Sometimes men do what they know (or believe) is bad, when they can avoid it, because they are overcome by pleasure' that Socrates argues is absurd." (author's italics) He also stresses "the complete dependence on hedonism in which Socrates places his argument against the explanation 'overcome by pleasure'."[27]

Possible explanations of akrasia are not, however, the subject of this chapter. The question at present under discussion is whether or not akrasia logically can occur, and Socrates' attack on one common explanation of akrasia is not therefore relevant. The explanation "overcome by pleasure" and Socrates' arguments against it will be considered in Chapter III, along with other possible explanations.

Socrates' argument is not limited to this narrow line of attack, however. Having illustrated the alleged absurdity of the explanation "overcome by pleasure", (355 A - E), he concludes by broadening his account considerably (358 B - D). He here goes far beyond an attack on one explanation of akrasia, by denying the possibility of akrasia occurring at all:-

> "Then if the pleasant is the good, no one who either knows or believes that there is another possible course of action, better than the one he is following, will ever continue on his present course when he might choose the better ... Then it must follow that no one willingly goes to meet evil or what he thinks to be evil."

This much broader argument clearly merits attention. It appears to contain references to both of the basic elements mentioned above, the "identification" element and the "knowledge" element. The "knowledge" element will be discussed later, but the "identification" element must be examined first, as the argument is dependent upon it - "Then <u>if</u> the pleasant is the good ..."

The hedonistic argument in the Protagoras is summed up by Socrates' statement, "All actions aimed at this end, namely a pleasant and painless life, must be fine actions, that is good and beneficial." (358 D) It should be noted that Socrates here does not completely identify goodness with pleasantness. He says that all that is pleasant is good and all that is painful is bad, but not that all that is good is pleasant and all that is bad is painful. However, Socrates does not make anything of this possible distinction or appear to think it important. Indeed in the earlier passage quoted (355 B) he seems to suggest that the identification <u>can</u> be complete:-

> "The absurdity of this will become evident if we stop using all these names together - pleasant, painful, good and evil - and since they have turned out to be only two, call them by only two names, first of all good and evil, and only at a different stage pleasure and pain."

It seems legitimate, therefore, to talk of Socrates' "identification of 'good' with 'pleasant' and of 'evil' with 'painful'."

Whether or not Socrates (or Plato) in fact accepted this argument is an open question, as apparently contradictory arguments can be found in the Gorgias and the Phaedo. A discussion of hedonism, as presented in the Platonic dialogues as a whole, is however beyond the scope of this enquiry, the object of which is to examine the validity of the Protagoras' argument against akrasia.

It is clear that this argument attempts to equate what is good with what is good <u>for</u> a man. What is good is what is desirable, and what is desirable is what will give a man ultimate satisfaction; pleasure in the long run is the criterion of what is good, and however "pleasure" is construed in this context, Socrates must be interpreted here as meaning that the goodness of an action must be judged in terms of the consequences of that action <u>for the agent</u>. The best course of action is that which seems likely to yield the greatest ultimate pleasure or satisfaction for a man, and as we all desire pleasure, we must therefore always desire to do that which will produce it. We cannot then fail to want to do what is good, though we may at times through intellectual error fail to recognise what the good is (i.e. what will lead to our ultimate pleasure).

It is not necessary to attempt to identify the particular brand of hedonism that Socrates is suggesting here, nor to

compare it with views presented in other dialogues, in order to note one important weakness in the Protagoras' argument. Although the problem of akrasia was, as far as we know, first formulated by the Greeks, it has since been recognised as both a philosophical and a practical question of universal application. Socrates' answer to the question would not have sounded odd to Greek ears, but it does sound decidedly odd to post-Christian and post-Kantian ears. If moral decisions are simply concerned with what is best for ourselves, what will lead to our ultimate satisfaction, then moral weakness is perhaps better described as intellectual miscalculation. But part of what we mean by a moral decision is that it is not concerned wholly (or perhaps at all) with what is best for ourselves. A moral dilemma is not solved (morally, at least) by consulting one's own self-interest. As Hare argues, "... to think morally is, at least, to subject one's own interests, where they conflict with those of other people, to a principle which one can accept as governing anyone's conduct in like circumstances."[28]

There are certainly important cases of apparent akrasia where the conflict is between what seem to be our short-term and our long-term interests and wants, between what will yield immediate satisfaction and what will yield future satisfaction (e.g. if I continue to smoke forty cigarettes a day, which I enjoy but believe to be foolish and wrong, and thus increase my chances of an early death from lung cancer, which I shall not enjoy.) These cases of "prudential" akrasia should not be overlooked, for they are perhaps even more puzzling than "moral" cases; it is my welfare that I am ignoring, so my akrasia can hardly be attributed to selfish motives. If any unitary

explanation of akrasia is to be attempted, prudential cases must also be considered, and may indeed provide clues to that explanation, as will be suggested in Chapter V. The weakness of the Socratic account, however, is that it reduces all cases of akrasia to prudential ones as a result of its underlying hedonism, and so fails to distinguish between a conflict of self-interest versus the interests of others on the one hand, and one of present self-interest versus future self-interest on the other. Even if it is acknowledged that Socrates (together with other Greek philosophers) was primarily concerned with what was good for man, and not just for oneself, and that man can often be said to have a moral duty to consider his own welfare (as in the above example), he has still failed to give any account of cases of akrasia in which the agent feels the force of "other-regarding" obligations, yet acts against them in pursuit of his own wants and interests. In this respect Socrates is to be identified with the conformist tradition rather than the competitive one.

This attack on the apparently limited view of akrasia held by Socrates needs qualification in two respects. Firstly, it is admittedly difficult in many cases to draw a sharp distinction between what is in my interests and what is in other people's interests. The dilemma mentioned above, for instance, could be reformulated as "Do I continue to smoke forty cigarettes, which I enjoy, but which costs money which I could give to Oxfam, or do I increase my chances of an early death from lung cancer, which I shall not enjoy and which will leave my family destitute?" In other words, prudential and altruistic considerations can become closely entwined, and it is difficult to

think of a dilemma or decision in which the relevant considerations could be described as wholly prudential or wholly altruistic.

Secondly, it could be argued that Socrates' emphasis upon pleasure and ultimate satisfaction in moral decision-making is simply a way of illustrating that the alleged distinction between prudential and altruistic motives is in fact a false one. We are not happy when doing what we know to be wrong; ultimate pleasure and satisfaction result only from our doing what we think we ought, morally, to do, i.e. considering the interests of others as well as ourselves. If I continue to buy my cigarettes, rather than make donations to Oxfam, I am not in fact likely to achieve ultimate satisfaction, because I shall feel guilty, selfish, unfulfilled and so on. I have thus made an intellectual error in miscalculating the relative amounts of satisfaction that I am likely to receive from being selfish on the one hand or unselfish on the other. Consideration of one's own ultimate satisfaction, therefore, is by no means irreconcilable with consideration of other people's interests, according to this argument.

In answer to these two qualifications two further points need to be made, however. Firstly, although it may often be difficult to draw a sharp distinction between what is in my interests and what is in other people's interests, the Socratic argument fails to admit the possibility of a conflict between what is <u>predominantly</u> in my own interests and what is <u>predominantly</u> in other people's interests. Cases of akrasia often appear to occur when the conflict is <u>basically</u> between self-interest and

concern for others' interests - where a man wants to do x (e.g. have an affair with a woman he finds attractive) but feels that there are also good reasons why he ought not to do x (e.g. both he and the woman are already married, and the affair might cause pain to their respective partners). Prudential and altruistic considerations are clearly intermingled in such cases, but the issue is still predominantly one of desires for self versus consideration for others. Socrates' view of the range of contexts in which akrasia is thought to occur remains then unduly narrow.

Secondly, the argument that ultimate satisfaction can only result from doing what one believes is right is presumably an empirical argument based on certain metaphysical assumptions about the nature of man - "man's nature is such that in actual fact he can only gain satisfaction in this way". Such an argument would require considerable justification and empirical support, which Socrates does not offer. In any case, even if the argument is accepted, it can only be valid for the man who is already virtuous. Feelings of remorse, selfishness and non-fulfilment will only afflict the man who feels that he should not have acted as he did, i.e. the man with moral sentiments. The argument cannot therefore say anything about "men in general" but only about a particular class of men. As Crombie puts it, "There are men who do not mind being wicked, who think it is foolish to do otherwise."[29] And again, "... while it may be true that virtue is more pleasurable than vice, it may also be true that I am unable to enjoy its pleasures. If I could be reformed, I should find myself a much happier man than I was in

my previous state; but so long as I am unregenerate, vice is pleasanter to me than virtue."[30]

Socrates could reply to this objection that the problem of akrasia does not arise with the wholly wicked and unregenerate man; it is only the man of sufficient moral sensibility to believe that he ought to do x who is commonly thought to be morally weak when he fails to act in accordance with his beliefs; whereas the wholly wicked and unregenerate man comes into a completely different category. This reply is not wholly adequate, however, for what then constitutes the virtuous man? In what sense can he be called virtuous and be said to have moral sentiments if he does not do what he believes he ought to do? If he is the sort of person (i.e. "moral" and "virtuous") who is not happy when doing what he believes to be wrong, and who gains ultimate satisfaction from doing what he believes he morally ought to do, what account can Socrates give of that man's "temptation", "feelings of conscience" and "self-control" or lack of it, when he is deciding what to do? To describe such phenomena in such a situation in terms of intellectual calculation or miscalculation is highly unconvincing. Furthermore, if the Socratic account leaves no room for the concepts of temptation and conscience, blame and punishment also become inapplicable. A man may be held to be intellectually at fault in failing to calculate correctly what will lead to his ultimate pleasure and satisfaction, but if his "wrong-doing" is by definition done in ignorance he can hardly be considered to be <u>morally</u> blameworthy or deserving of punishment for a <u>moral</u> lapse. Some possible reasons why the phenomena

of conscience are ignored in the Socratic account will be suggested in Chapter III, when the concept of conscience is explored in some detail.

Socrates' attempted identification, then, of "good" with "pleasant" and of "evil" with "painful", upon which his broader argument that "no one goes willingly to meet evil" is based, has been shown to impose serious limitations on that argument. In the first place, moral conflicts between what is, predominantly, concern for one's own interests and what is, predominantly, concern for other people's interests are not considered as contexts in which situations of akrasia could occur, despite the fact that such conflicts are probably central to our common view of akrasia. In the second place, Socrates' account of what is happening in apparent cases of akrasia ignores the psychological features that are evident in cases of moral conflict, and fails to give an adequate description of the man who is susceptible to moral considerations but who succumbs on occasion to what he recognises as temptation.

This examination of the first basic element in Socrates' argument has already cast serious doubt, therefore, upon the scope and validity of that argument.

(ii) "Ignorance" and "knowledge"

Socrates' argument against the common view of akrasia is heavily dependent also upon a particular view of knowledge, ignorance and belief, and this element must now be examined.

The description of the common view of akrasia is in fact prefaced by a discussion about the nature of knowledge:-

"Now uncover another part of your mind, Protagoras. What is your attitude to knowledge? Do you share the common view about that also? Most people think, in general terms, that it is nothing strong, no leading or ruling element. They don't see it like that. They hold that it is not the knowledge that a man possesses which governs him, but something else - now passion, now pleasure, now pain, sometimes love and frequently fear. They just think of knowledge as a slave, pushed around by all the other affections. Is this your view too, or would you rather say that knowledge is a fine thing, quite capable of ruling a man, and that if he can distinguish good from evil, nothing will force him to act otherwise than as knowledge dictates, since wisdom is all the reinforcement he needs?"

"Not only is this my view, replied Protagoras, but I above all men should think it shame to speak of wisdom and knowledge as anything but the most powerful elements in human life."

"Well and truly answered, said I. But I expect you know that most men don't believe us. They maintain that there are many who recognise the best but are unwilling to act upon it." (352 A - D)

A little later the estimation that is involved in "the correct choice of pleasure and pain" is said to be "a special skill or branch of knowledge":-

"... when people make a wrong choice of pleasures and pains - that is, of good and evil - the cause of their mistake is lack of knowledge. We can go further, and call it, as you have already agreed, a science of measurement, and you know yourselves that a wrong action which is done without knowledge is done in ignorance. So that is what being mastered by pleasure really is - ignorance." (357 A - E)

And finally:-

"Then if the pleasant is the good, no one who either knows or believes that there is another possible course of action better than the one he is following will ever continue on his present course when he might choose the better. To 'act beneath yourself' is the result of pure ignorance; to 'be your own master' is wisdom."

All agreed.

"And may we define ignorance as having a false opinion and being mistaken on matters of great moment?"

They approved this too.

"Then it must follow that no one willingly goes to meet evil or what he thinks to be evil." (358 B - D)

It can be seen from these extracts how closely the "knowledge" element of the argument is interwoven with the "good/pleasant identification" element. Many of the points that have been made against the latter, therefore, are also relevant in evaluating the latter, and need not be repeated here.

The "knowledge" element, however, must also be considered on its own merits, for in Socrates' view it is at the centre of the problem of akrasia. How can a man who knows what is right do what he knows to be wrong? Socrates seems to be saying that this is impossible if a man "really knows", and that the common view of akrasia is consequently mistaken.

In order to examine this argument more closely, it will be necessary to look beyond the Protagoras to other dialogues for a fuller account of Socrates' view of knowledge. In doing this we immediately meet the problem of whether Socrates' view of knowledge was the same as Plato's; and if not, which are we reading in any particular dialogue? The Socratic question as such lies outside the scope of this study, but some sort of conclusion must be agreed if a coherent account of "Socrates'" view of knowledge is to be presented, in so far as it is relevant to the problem of akrasia. For the purposes of this discussion then, an attempt will be made to identify two strands in the "Socratic" view of knowledge, both of which are detectable in the Protagoras argument. These two strands may be labelled the "self-knowledge" strand and the "ideal

knowledge" strand, but this distinction implies neither that one strand should be ascribed to the historical Socrates and one to Plato, nor that both strands should be ascribed to both persons, nor indeed that these two are the only strands that could be identified. We can now proceed to examine the two strands and their implications for akrasia, without becoming embroiled in the intricacies of the Socratic question.

i) The "self-knowledge" strand can be dealt with quite briefly as it is closely connected with the "good/pleasant identification" - "... when people make a wrong choice of pleasures and pains, that is, of good and evil, the cause of their mistake is lack of knowledge." (357 D) Moral knowledge thereby becomes self-knowledge, i.e. knowledge of what is likely to produce pleasure and satisfaction for one's self. A component of skill is also involved in "weighing pleasures against pleasures ... pains against pains ... (and) pleasures against pains." (356 B) The main practical difficulties concerning the exercise of this knowledge and skill are presumably

(a) trying to predict the future consequences of present actions and to determine what will lead to ultimate pleasure and what to ultimate pain; and

(b) achieving a balanced evaluation of present and future pleasures and pains, without "exaggerating the size of a pleasure (or pain) which is close to us in time," as Crombie puts it.[31]

This type of empirical knowledge is clearly necessary in moral decision-making. Wilson's components of GIG and AUTEMP,[32]

for example, refer to the two aspects which Socrates is here describing, i.e. prediction of likely consequences and self-awareness. But to claim that such knowledge is sufficient, and that it is what "moral knowledge" consists in, is to fall prey to the naturalistic fallacy. Knowledge of what is good and right is apparently being deduced from knowledge of what will yield personal satisfaction. Self-knowledge can thus only be accorded the importance that Socrates claims for it in moral decision-making on the assumption of the hedonistic premise already examined, i.e. if whatever is pleasant is good, we have only to determine (empirically) what actually is pleasant in order to know what is good. The "self-knowledge" strand of Socrates' argument then takes him no further than did the "good/pleasant identification", and is open to the same objections.

ii) The "ideal knowledge" strand is hinted at in the Protagoras by references to knowledge being "a fine thing quite capable of ruling a man", (352 C), to wisdom and knowledge being "the most powerful elements in human life", (352 D), and to there being "nothing more powerful than knowledge" (357 C). Even in these brief references it is implied that knowledge is an ideal, rarely perhaps reached in practice but still worth trying to attain. Once it is attained it cannot but affect a man's conduct; indeed it must become the most powerful influence upon him, presumably because of the insight and understanding which it affords him.

These points about "knowledge" are by no means at variance with the familiar distinction that is made in several of the dialogues between "knowledge" and "belief" or "opinion",

nor indeed with the epistemological aspects of the Theory of Ideas; both of these areas must be briefly examined.

The distinction between "knowledge" (episteme) and "right opinion" (orthe doxa) is introduced in the"Meno",[33] where it is argued that "right opinion is as good a guide as knowledge for the purpose of acting rightly" and is therefore "no less useful than knowledge". (97 B - C) There is, however, an important difference between the two, namely that "right opinions" are impermanent:-

> "... they will not stay long. They run away from a man's mind, so that they are not worth much until you tether them by working out the reason (aitias logismos). That process ... is recollection, as we agreed earlier. Once they are tied down, they become knowledge, and are stable. That is why knowledge is something more valuable than right opinion. What distinguishes one from the other is the tether." (98 A)

This distinction is developed further in later dialogues, notably the "Phaedo", "Symposium" and "Republic", where the Theory of Ideas is expounded. The sensible world of particulars in which we live can yield at best only "right opinion", whereas the world of Ideas alone can provide full "knowledge". Thus, in the "Republic", the true philosopher, or lover of wisdom, "whose passion it is to see the truth" (475 E), is said to be able to apprehend the world of Ideas, while the lover of belief or opinion is concerned only with the world of particulars:-

> "Those, then, who are able to see visible beauty - or justice or the like - in their many manifestations, but are incapable, even with another's help, of reaching absolute Beauty, may be said to believe, but cannot be said to know what they believe ... And what about those who see the eternal, unchanging absolute realities? They surely have knowledge and not opinion ... and they set their hearts on the objects of knowledge, while those of the other type are set on the objects of belief." (479)

The philosopher's search for "knowledge" is illustrated in the "Republic" and the "Symposium" in the form of a progression or ascent from the lower levels of "belief" and sense perceptions of material objects to the apprehension of the Ideas themselves, which alone constitutes real "knowledge". In the "Republic",[34] the final stage of the ascent is the apprehension of the Idea of the Good, which is described as "giving reality and being to the other Ideas". (509 B) So the philosopher is pictured as rising from the lower regions of illusion (eikasia) and belief (pistis) to the sphere of "semi-ideal" mathematical concepts (dianoia), and thence to the Ideas themselves and the supreme Idea of the Good. Only then will the philosopher have "knowledge" and be able to say, "I know that x is good, beautiful, just etc." Apprehension of the Ideas is therefore both a necessary and a sufficient condition of "knowledge", moral or otherwise; and once this "knowledge" is acquired, it will become the object of reverence and awe - "the most powerful element in human life ... quite capable of ruling a man," as was stated in the Protagoras argument. To apprehend the Ideas of the Good or the Just or the Truth, and then not to act upon that insight is logically impossible, which means that akrasia has again been shown implicitly to be likewise impossible - one cannot "know the good" and yet fail to pursue it. The Theory of Ideas is not explicitly put forward as an argument against akrasia, as the hedonistic argument is, but it can be seen from this account that it does constitute a further argument, the validity of which must be considered.

The first point to note about this argument is that it

uses the verb "to know" in a highly technical and restricted sense. We have first to accept the metaphysical theory of the two worlds and then to allow that it is only the world of Ideas that can yield "knowledge", before the argument can stand up. A highly stipulative and unusual definition of "knowledge" is thus being offered.

Furthermore, this definition of knowledge is given in terms of the objects of knowledge, and likewise with belief; the world of Ideas furnishes the objects of knowledge, while the world of particulars furnishes the objects of belief. Such an account of knowledge and belief cannot however be easily applied to propositional knowledge and belief. If I claim that I know London, London could be called the object of my knowledge, but what is the object of my claim that I know that London is a hotbed of vice? If the reply is that the object is the proposition, "London is a hotbed of vice", the further objection arises that one could claim both to believe and to know that proposition - the belief might well precede the knowledge; alternatively, one person might claim to know the proposition, while another might only declare his belief. It appears then quite possible for the same proposition to be the "object" of both knowledge and belief, according to our normal uses of these concepts. This is a serious objection to the implicit argument against akrasia, as it seems to be propositional knowledge (and belief) rather than knowledge by acquaintance that is mainly involved in situations of apparent akrasia - when I know or believe that I ought to do x, but decide not to do it. A fuller analysis of the nature of "moral knowledge" will however be needed later.

Aristotle brings two further relevant objections against the view that one cannot act contrary to what one knows (as opposed to believes) to be best. Firstly, that if doubt and hesitation are present, the situation is not what is commonly thought of as akrasia:-

> "But if it is opinion and not knowledge, if it is not a strong conviction that resists but a weak one, as in men who hesitate, we sympathise with their failure to stand by such convictions against strong appetites; but we do not sympathise with wickedness, nor with any of the other blameworthy states." 35

And secondly that it is possible to hold knowledge and true opinion with equal conviction:-

> "... for some people when in a state of opinion do not hesitate, but think they know exactly. If then, the notion is that owing to their weak conviction, those who have opinion are more likely to act against their judgment than those who know, we answer that there need be no difference between knowledge and opinion in this respect; for some men are no less convinced of what they think than others of what they know." 36

(The issue of "weak conviction" and Aristotle's own suggestions as to the type of knowledge involved in situations of apparent akrasia will be examined in Chapter IV, along with other possible explanations of akrasia.)

One final objection to the "ideal knowledge" argument against akrasia must be considered. The Theory of Ideas, whether it is applied to what might be called "is" or "ought" Ideas, ignores the question of motivation. The philosopher can apprehend the Idea of Yellow or Square, for example, ("is" Ideas), and also the Idea of the Good or the Just ("ought" Ideas). Having done so, he cannot then, according to the theory, make a perceptual or cognitive mistake about the yellowness or squareness of a physical object, or the goodness or justice of a course of action.

But this apprehension or recognition can have no necessary implications of resulting action. A draughtsman might apprehend the Idea of Square, and yet fail to construct an adequate square in the course of his work, through lack of care, effort or interest. In the same way one might recognise just actions or good intentions, and yet fail to do anything about them; the act of recognition might be aesthetically pleasing, but there seems no logical reason why the motivation to form such intentions and pursue such actions oneself must be present. Indeed, doubt is cast, by implication at least, in the "Republic" upon the logical necessity of "right action" following upon "knowledge of the Good" by the institution of social safeguards (e.g. the abolition of family life and of private property), designed to prevent the Philosopher Kings from being distracted from their duties to the community despite their acquisition of the highest forms of "knowledge". The Theory of Ideas, then, fails to dispose of the logical gap between knowledge and action, which allows for the possibility of akrasia. The most that the theory could claim would be that it is psychologically impossible for a man to apprehend and "know" the Idea of the Good and then to fail to act upon it, but this is an empirical claim, the validation of which bristles with difficulties.

Furthermore, even if the claim is intended to be a psychological rather than a logical one, it still suggests an over-optimistic view of what might be achieved by means of teaching and instruction; for if wrong-doing is the result of ignorance, the elimination of ignorance (by the kind of educational programme described in the "Republic") should lead

to the elimination of wrong-doing. The inadequacies of various educational methods as means of ensuring moral behaviour and preventing akrasia will be discussed at length in Chapter VI, but at this point it may merely be noted that the Socratic account implies a highly simplistic view of "moral education" by appearing to assume that to teach a person that x is right, good or just is the equivalent of teaching him to do x.

The "knowledge" element of the Socratic argument against akrasia, therefore, is reduced to a total dependence upon linguistic stipulations, which are in turn derived from a speculative, metaphysical theory. As Lukes puts it, "What Plato and Socrates were doing was to offer a tacit persuasive definition of 'knowledge' so that a man cannot, by definition, know what is right and good if his actions are wrong and bad."[37] Such a procedure is of course always open to a philosopher, but for it to be productive it is necessary that the proposed definition should not do undue violence to common usage. In this case it appears that it does, and the result is an argument which claims, by means of arbitrary, linguistic legislation, to show that a problem, commonly thought to be important, is in fact non-existent.

C. Conclusions

This examination of the two elements in the Socratic argument that "no one willingly goes to meet evil" has revealed a number of weaknesses and limitations in that argument.

The "identification" element ignored the type of moral conflict that is commonly thought to be central to situations

of apparent akrasia, i.e. conflict between what is predominantly concern for one's own interests and what is predominantly concern for the interests of others. It also failed to give an adequate account of psychological phenomena such as temptation, remorse and conscience.

The "ignorance" and "knowledge" element was considered under two headings. The "self-knowledge" strand of the argument was seen to be based upon the same hedonistic premises as was the "identification" element and was accordingly open to the same objections as was that element. The "ideal knowledge" strand required the acceptance of the highly speculative, metaphysical Theory of Ideas, and of the linguistic stipulations concerning knowledge and belief which followed from it and which bore little resemblance to our normal use of these concepts. Without these stipulations the logical impossibility of akrasia did not follow, as the question of motivation remained unanswered.

What the purpose of Socrates (and Plato) was in presenting this paradox is an interesting question,[38] but one that is not strictly relevant to this study. Likewise the question of whether Plato's view of akrasia changed as his ideas developed (Laws 734 and 863 suggest that it did) need not concern us here, as the object of this section has been to examine in their various aspects the strongest arguments that we find in the dialogues against the logical possibility of akrasia. These arguments have been shown to be unconvincing, and have failed to refute the view that we at times do what we know we ought not to do.

This examination of the Socratic account, however, has also revealed several suggestive pointers which will need to be followed up when consideration is given to definitions and explanations of akrasia in Chapters IV and V and to educational methods of combatting akrasia in Chapter VI. These can be listed briefly as follows:-

a) Psychological features of akrasia, such as wrestling with temptation and succumbing, feeling remorse and guilt, acting against one's conscience and suffering resultant pangs, are conspicuous by their absence in the Socratic account, and thereby seriously weaken its explanatory force. These features cannot be ignored in any discussion of akrasia, or indeed of moral judgment and action.

b) "Self-knowledge", though not sufficient to ensure that one always does what one believes one ought to do, nevertheless appears prima facie to be an important factor both in deciding what one can, ought, wants and is likely to do in a particular situation, and consequently in the relationship between moral judgment and action.

c) The predicting of consequences and, in particular, the weighing of present and immediate considerations against future, remote ones also offers a promising area for further exploration, for a characteristic feature of many examples of apparent akrasia is that the agent seems to act "in the heat of the moment" and to be swayed by immediate, situational factors.

These points will be developed as the study proceeds;

but before it can be safely assumed that the Socratic denial of akrasia has been successfully countered, it will be necessary to look at a modern attempt to eliminate the gap between moral judgment and action.

3. Hare's Argument

A. Summary of the Argument

In his books, "The Language of Morals"[39] and "Freedom and Reason",[40] R.M. Hare develops a different version of the argument that akrasia is logically impossible, and this version must now be examined. (In the following references, the abbreviations L.M. and F.R. will be used to indicate the two books.)

The opening sentence of L.M. immediately raises issues that appear relevant to our problem - "If we were to ask of a person, 'What are his moral principles?' the way in which we could be most sure of a true answer would be by studying what he *did*." (author's italics)

In amplifying this statement, Hare summarises what is in effect the main thesis of the book - "The reason why actions are in a peculiar way revelatory of moral principles is that the function of moral principles is to guide conduct. The language of morals is one sort of prescriptive language." (1.1)

Arguing throughout the book against what he calls "descriptivism", he examines the concepts of "good", "right" and "ought", and their function in both moral and non-moral contexts. While admitting that these concepts have some descriptive function, Hare nevertheless asserts that their primary function

is prescriptive or action-guiding - "Their (i.e.'ought'-sentences') primary function is not to give information; it is to prescribe or advise or instruct; and this function can be fulfilled when no information is being conveyed." (10.4.)

In his analysis of "ought" (which is of particular relevance to the problem of akrasia) he distinguishes between three uses - "It is then possible to treat 'I ought to do x' as a confused mixture of three judgements.

1. 'x is required in order to conform to the standard which people generally accept.' (statement of sociological fact)
2. 'I have a feeling that I ought to do x'. (statement of psychological fact)
3. 'I ought to do x.' (value-judgement)" (11.2.)

It is the third sense that is crucial to Hare's thesis, for he claims that all value-judgments (when "ought"-sentences are being used evaluatively) "entail imperatives". He makes this a matter of definition - "I propose to say that the test, whether someone is using the judgement, 'I ought to do x', as a value-judgement or not is, 'Does he or does he not recognise that if he assents to the judgement, he must also assent to the command, "Let me do x"?'" (11.2.) This statement is qualified by the concession that there are "degrees of sincere assent, not all of which involve actually obeying the command," but a detailed analysis of this problem is postponed until "another occasion". (11.2.)

It follows then from the action-guiding function of the concepts under examination that:-

> "a moral judgement has to be such that if a person assents to it, he must assent to some imperative sentence derivable from it; in other words, if a person does not assent to

> some such imperative sentence, that is knock-down evidence that he does not assent to the moral judgement in an evaluative sense." (11.3.)

Earlier in the book Hare says of "assenting":-

> "If ... we assent to a second-person command addressed to ourselves, we are said to be sincere in our assent if and only if we do or resolve to do what the speaker has told us to do ... It is a tautology to say that we cannot sincerely assent to a second-person command addressed to ourselves, and at the same time not perform it, if now is the occasion for performing it and it is in our (physical and psychological) power to do so." (2.2.)

Hare claims that the logical distinctions he makes shed considerable light on the problem of akrasia. However, he does not inquire further into this "fascinating problem", apart from commenting that the phrase, "thinks that he ought", needs a more thorough analysis, and that the criteria in ordinary speech for saying "He thinks that he ought" are "exceedingly elastic" -

> "If a person does not do something, but the omission is accompanied by feelings of guilt etc., we normally say that he has not done what he thinks he ought. It is therefore necessary to qualify the criterion given above for sincerely assenting to a command, and to admit that there are degrees of sincere assent ..." (see above, 11.2.)

This qualification makes Hare's implied view of akrasia in "The Language of Morals" difficult to summarise succinctly. His argument would appear to be, however, that it is logically impossible for a person to say "I ought to do x", using "ought" in a evaluative sense, and then not to do or resolve to do x. This is because he is making a value-judgement, which must entail sincerely assenting to the command, "Let me do x", and because this assent (in its sincerest form, at least) entails doing or resolving to do what is commanded. One cannot then fail to do, or resolve to do, what one thinks one ought to, provided that "ought" is being used in its primary

evaluative sense, and provided that one is physically and psychologically capable of doing so.

In his later book,"Freedom and Reason", Hare tries to clarify and develop some of the above points; in particular he devotes more attention to the specific issue of akrasia.

He argues throughout the book, as in "The Language of Morals", for a doctrine of universal prescriptivism - "a combination, that is to say, of universalism (the view that moral judgements are universalisable) and prescriptivism (the view that they are, at any rate typically, prescriptive)." (F.R. 2.5.) That is, "the meaning of the word 'ought' and other moral words is such that a person who uses them commits himself thereby to a universal rule", (universalisability) (3.1.), and "it is part of the meaning of these terms that judgements containing them are, as typically used, intended as guides to conduct." (prescriptivity) (5.1.)

There are, however, a great many kinds of "off-colour" moral judgments lacking "full, universally prescriptive force," and it is these that are involved in cases of akrasia (5.1.) Akrasia in fact results when moral judgments (in an "off-colour" sense) are made which lack either universalisability or prescriptivity. The first case is when we do not do something which <u>in general</u> we commend, or do something which <u>in general</u> we condemn (5.4.); the second case is where we decide that we and anyone in like circumstances, ought to do something, and then, without any hint of going back on what we had decided, do not do it. (5.5.)

To fulfil both of these conditions in moral decision-making is very difficult to do - "Something has to give; and this is the explanation of moral weakness. Not only do we give, because we are morally weak; we have found for ourselves a language which shares our weakness, and gives where we do." (5.5.)

One feature of this language is the "attenuated" sense in which "ought" can be used. To illustrate this, Hare describes a type of backsliding which he calls "special pleading." This is when one starts off accepting the universal and prescriptive demands of a moral principle, but discovers that it is contrary to one's own interests to act accordingly:-

> "While continuing to prescribe that everyone else should act in accordance with the principle, we do not so prescribe to ourselves ... The word 'ought' can remain universal in that it retains all the descriptive meaning that it ever had, but it ceases to express a universal prescription - the prescription is not universal and the universality is only descriptive." (5.6.)

A feeling of guilty conscience restores the appearance of prescriptive universality, and the expression "think that I ought" loses its "robustness", though it does so "without, in a sense, departing from its original meaning." (5.6.)

Hare goes on to make an important distinction. Those who act in the way just described and with full awareness of what they are doing are "the real hypocrites". The majority of people, however, suffer from some sort of "inability" to do what they think they ought. (5.7.) As examples of this "inability", Hare quotes the dilemmas of Medea and St. Paul, and concludes that "it is not in Medea's or St. Paul's psychological power to act on the imperatives that are entailed by the moral judgements

which they are making." (5.7.) From this he deduces that "the typical case of moral weakness, as opposed to that of hypocrisy, is a case of 'ought but can't'," and that in this case the "ought" becomes "down-graded". (5.8.)

The view of akrasia presented in "Freedom and Reason" appears then to be as follows. It is still logically impossible for a person to say "I ought to do x" and then not to do or resolve to do x, as long as the "ought" is being used in its full-blooded, evaluative, "non-attenuated" sense, and as long as the moral judgment is not "off-colour" and lacking full, universally prescriptive force. When the "ought" does become "attenuated" and the moral judgment "off-colour", however, one of two things is happening. Either it is a case of "purposive backsliding or hypocrisy" which can also take the form of insincerity or self-deception), "where a man does what he says he ought not to, though perfectly able to resist the temptation to do it", (5.9.) or it is a case of psychological impossibility, "where the man cannot do the act". (5.9.)

B. Critique of the Argument

Hare's claim that his logical distinctions shed considerable light on the problem of akrasia is not unfounded, but there are a number of points in his argument which invite closer examination. These points centre around Hare's choice and use of terminology, and will be considered under two main headings - terminological oddities and terminological stipulations.

(i) Terminological Oddities

At a number of key points in his argument, Hare uses phrases which sound decidedly odd and unnatural in the contexts in which they occur. Here are three examples:-

(a) "Assenting to a command"

The oddity of this expression is remarked upon by Gardiner in an examination of Hare's argument:-[41]

> "... the expression 'assent to a command', even when such assent is described as being given to second-person commands, is not one with a common use. We ordinarily speak of obeying commands, of intending to obey commands, of giving it to be understood that we will obey commands, and (perhaps) of giving it to be understood that we intend to obey commands. But 'assenting to commands' seems to me to be peculiar."

Hare's own example of "assent to a command" does not lessen the peculiarity - "And if I said, 'Shut the door', and you answered, 'Aye, aye, sir', this ... would be a sign of assent." (L.M. 2.2.) But if the answer, "Aye, aye, sir", is a sign of assent, what does the assent itself consist in, apart from the actual shutting of the door? In many cases the response to a command is simply obedience or disobedience; we do as we are told or we do not do as we are told. Hare seems to be saying that the soldier on parade who is commanded "About turn!" does something in addition to the carrying out of the command; he "assents" to it as well. But no act of assent (or dissent) is necessarily involved in such cases, over and above the actual performance (or non-performance) of the action. We may at times ponder over whether or not to obey a command, and finally make a deliberate decision to "assent" or "dissent", but such a procedure is contingent and by no means necessitated by the logic

of commands. In many (and perhaps the standard) cases of obeying and disobeying commands, "assent" seems a superfluous concept.

Hare has in fact failed to clarify whether he is making a logical or a psychological point about "assent". In either case there are serious problems. If he is saying that, prior to obeying (or disobeying) any command, we always go through a psychological process of assenting (or dissenting) to it, this seems to be simply untrue, as the example of the soldier on parade shows. If, on the other hand, he is making "assent" a necessary, logical part of "obeying a command", but one which does not necessarily refer to a corresponding psychological process, then it is difficult to see what work the concept is doing and what it adds to our understanding of the logic of commands.

(b) "Assenting to the first-person command, 'Let me do x'."

Hare's test of "whether someone is using the judgement 'I ought to do x' as a value-judgement or not is, 'Does he or does he not recognise that if he assents to the judgement, he must also assent to the command "Let me do x"?'" (L.M. 11.2.) Elsewhere he uses "Let me do so and so" as an example of a "first-person command", (L.M. 2.2.) and in another place amplifies this usage:-

> "A man who is wondering, in a game of chess, what move to make, may say to himself, 'Let me try moving Q to KB 4,' and act accordingly. It is in this sense that I shall be using this form of expression ('Let me do a') - in the sense, that is, in which it is the first-person analogue of the second-person 'Try moving ...' and the first-person plural 'Let's try moving ...'" (F.R. 4.3.)

The oddity of Hare's use of the phrase "assenting to a command" has been mentioned in (i) above. When the command becomes in addition a "first-person command" the oddity increases. For his interpretation of a value-judgment Hare needs the notion of a self-addressed imperative, but it is not easy to see how such an imperative functions, outside the canons of classical grammar. A self-addressed imperative is meaningful only if what Hare calls "the curious metaphor of the divided personality" (F.R. 5.8) is adopted, whereby our "higher self" issues commands to our recalcitrant "lower nature", but this is of course not a first-person but a second-person command - our "higher self" is issuing second-person commands to our "lower nature" (Do this, or don't do that) in the same way that another person might tell us to do or not do something.

A first-person command then cannot take this form. It must be expressed in the "Let me do x" form, but doubts then arise (pace the grammar books) as to whether this is a genuine example of a "command", as we usually understand the term. A command implies that there is someone (or something) commanding, and someone being commanded, but a "first-person command" does not have these two elements (unless the divided personality metaphor is invoked, in which case the command becomes a second-person one). It appears then that the notion of a "first-person command" is self-contradictory.

Hare's own example illustrates the difficulties well. "Let me try moving Q to KB 4" is hardly a command; it is part of the process of deliberation or of musing what to do - "Let's see what would happen if ..." When we are engaged in this kind

of process, we make suggestions to ourselves, consider possibilities, and weigh up pros and cons; we participate in a form of internal dialogue, but this dialogue does certainly not consist in the issuing of commands which are then either obeyed or disobeyed. The situation resembles that of the committee room much more than that of the parade ground. To illustrate this further by using Hare's chess example, if I take twenty minutes to decide which move I shall make in a championship match, I shall spend that time in considering numerous possibilities and debating their respective advantages and disadvantages. What I shall not do is to spend the time in addressing a series of commands to myself, which I then either obey or disobey. The same will apply to the deliberation of a moral issue.

Again the question of the logical or psychological status of Hare's argument arises (as in (i) above), but this time it seems even clearer that "assenting to a first-person command" cannot refer to any necessary psychological process that occurs when we use value-judgments. Indeed, "assenting to a first-person command" seems so inaccurate a description of what happens when we decide to do what we think we ought to do, that we are bound to question Hare's right to introduce such odd terminology in order, apparently, to make a logical, definitional point about what he conceives to be the nature of value-judgments. If Hare's interpretation of value-judgments requires him to do such violence to ordinary usage, perhaps that interpretation itself should be questioned.

(c) Moral decision-making

Hare's emphasis upon "universal prescriptivism" leads him to say some more odd things about the making of moral judgments and decisions, e.g.:-

> "The real difficulty of making a moral decision is ... that of finding some action to which one is prepared to commit oneself, and which at the same time one is prepared to accept as exemplifying a principle of action binding on anyone in like circumstances." (F.R. 5.5.)

> "We are to go about looking for moral judgements which we can both accept for our own conduct and universalise to cover the conduct of other actual or hypothetical people." (F.R. 10.4.)

This description of moral decision-making in terms of finding actions and going about looking for moral judgements conjures up some weird pictures of moral agents engaged in a frantic search for something to be moral about. Making a moral decision becomes like discovering the key to a complex code or solving a difficult acrostic; one tries out various possibilities (addressing first-person commands to oneself in the process, no doubt) and finally, if successful, comes across an answer that fits.

It is hard to resist the conclusion that Hare is here, as in the two previous cases, (a) and (b), simply not giving a sufficiently comprehensive (or indeed comprehensible) account of what we mean by making a moral decision. As Gardiner says of expressions like "assenting to principles", "recognising situations to be ones to which a principle applies", and "assenting to moral judgements":- "I think that this can be a misleading way of referring to people's normal reactions to situations which call for some kind of moral decision or choice."[42]

It is misleading because it concentrates upon only one aspect of those situations, the aspect that is concerned with the formation, acceptance and application of principles. These principles moreover appear to be, in a sense, "external" to the situations, rather than an integral part of them - sets of instructions to be looked for, consulted, and either obeyed or disobeyed, when we come upon a problem. More will be said later in this study about the role of principles in the making of moral decisions, and about Hare's account of them, as this subject is particularly relevant to questions of moral learning. For the moment, however, it will suffice to comment that Hare's choice of terminology here, and the emphasis which he lays upon principles, suggest a picture of the moral life which is largely concerned with the intellectual process of looking for, and accepting or rejecting moral judgments and principles, and which largely ignores typical situations of moral conflict and indecision when we find ourselves called upon to make immediate, practical choices and decisions.

At these three key points in his argument, then, we find Hare using language which appears extremely ill-suited to the situations and events that he is trying to describe. The most obvious explanation of this is that he is being forced to use such inappropriate expressions in order to present a particular interpretation of moral language and behaviour. This interpretation also causes Hare to employ terminology that is stipulative, rather as Socrates' was, and this aspect of the argument must next be examined.

(ii) Terminological Stipulations and "Central Uses"

One of Hare's stipulative definitions has already been noted in (i) (b) above, i.e.:-

> "Value-judgement" - "I propose to say that the test, whether someone is using the judgement 'I ought to do x' as a value-judgement or not is, 'Does he or does he not recognise that if he assents to the judgement, he must also assent to the command, "Let me do x"?'" (L.M. 11.2.)

Here are some other examples:-

> "Evaluative" - "I should not say that an ought-sentence was being used evaluatively unless imperatives were held to follow from it." (L.M. 11.1)

And again:-

> "If a person does not assent to some such imperative sentence, that is knock-down evidence that he does not assent to the moral judgement in an evaluative sense ... This is true by my definition of the word evaluative." (L.M. 11.3.)

> "Sincere Assent" - "It is a tautology to say that we cannot sincerely assent to a second-person imperative addressed to ourselves, and at the same time not perform it, if now is the occasion for performing it and it is in our (physical and psychological) power to do so." (L.M. 2.2)

> "Value-judgement" and "Prescriptive" - "In "The Language of Morals' I performed what some have thought an evasive manoeuvre by defining "value-judgement" in such a way that if a man did not do what he thought he ought, he could not be using the word evaluatively. I have in this book done something similar with the word 'prescriptive' ..." (F.R. 5.9)

What Hare has done by means of such definitions is to construct his own self-sufficient, interlocking set of moral concepts, which form part of what he elsewhere calls "a holy or angelic moral language". (F.R. 5.5) As a result, his doctrine is, as Lukes puts it,[43] "curiously self-protecting" and "cannot be refuted, just as an axiomatic system cannot be refuted." If we form a "value-judgement", we are using "ought"

evaluatively and prescriptively, which entails that we sincerely assent to the command "Let me do x", which in turn entails that we do x, if it is in our power to do so.

Such an argument certainly cannot be "refuted", but it can be questioned on at least two grounds, i.e. can the concepts and expressions which are used in the definitions be meaningfully applied to the actual situations which they are intended to describe, and to what extent do the definitions proposed do violence to common usage?

The first question has already been considered in (i) (a) above, where difficulties were noted concerning the notions of "assenting to a command" and "assenting to a first-person command". These notions did not offer very appropriate or helpful ways of describing the situations to which they were intended to refer. Hare claims at one point that his inquiry is, "as most philosophical inquiries are, at one and the same time about language and about what happens ... One cannot study language, in a philosophical way, without studying the world that we are talking about." (F.R. 5.5) However, the references to these notions of "assent" are examples of the use of language which bears little resemblance to "what happens" and to "the world that we are talking about".

The second question, concerning common usage requires more detailed examination at this point, as it raises the important problem of "central uses". In many passages, Hare is not merely suggesting his own system of terminology; he is claiming that his use of the concept is the "central", "typical",

or "primary" use. Here are some examples, some of which have already been quoted:-

1. "... moral judgements, in their central use, have it as their function to guide conduct." (F.R. 5.3)

2. "There are a great many kinds of 'off-colour' moral judgements which do not, like the perfect specimen, 'imply "can".'" (F.R. 5.1)

3. "... the typical case of moral weakness, as opposed to that of hypocrisy, is a case of 'ought but can't'." (F.R. 5.8)

4. "There are, indeed, many ways in which it (the expression 'think that I ought') can lose its robustness without, in a sense, departing from its original meaning." (F.R. 5.6)

5. "... there are prescriptive uses of these (moral) words, and ... these uses are important and central to the words' meaning." (F.R. 5.9)

6. "... the primary logical interest of the evaluative sense of 'ought'". (L.M. 11.3)

7. "It is a tautology to say that we cannot sincerely assent to a second-person command addressed to ourselves, and at the same time not perform it ... " (L.M. 2.2)

Hare's claim that these uses are central, typical, primary, original, perfect etc. seems designed to bolster up his thesis that to use a value-judgment is to assent sincerely to a first-person imperative, which in turn necessitates doing the action, if one is able to do so. This thesis and its dependence upon "central uses" can be examined in two parts, one dealing with the relationship between value-judgments and action, and the other with the notion of ability to act.

(a) Value-judgments and Action

Hare maintains that a man cannot (logically) make the value-judgment "I ought to do x", and then fail to assent

sincerely to the prescription "Let me do x." Similarly a man cannot (logically) sincerely assent to the prescription and then fail to act, if he is physically and psychologically able. This is because of the logical force of the concepts "ought", "value-judgment", and "sincere assent", all of which in their "central uses" entail commitment to action. Thus, if a man says, "I ought to do x", and then fails to assent to the prescription, he by definition has not used "ought" in its "central" sense, and he has not made a "value-judgment" in its "central" sense. These concepts have become "off-colour", "attenuated" and non-"full-blooded". Similarly if he sincerely assents to the prescription, but then does not act accordingly (given the physical and psychological ability), this is by definition not "sincere assent" in its "central" sense -

" ... there are degrees of sincere assent." (L.M. 11.2)

Hare's claim for the "centrality" of these uses has predictably been challenged. Gardiner[44] argues:-

> "(Hare's) criteria for 'sincere assent' are not the ordinary criteria by which we determine whether or not a man is sincere in the resolves or promises he makes ... We have a use for expressions like 'doing what I believed to be wrong' or 'acting contrary to my principles' when there is no obvious implication of insincerity or of change of mind ..." (author's italics)

He concludes that there are "a host of considerations, behavioural and non-behavioural", which are relevant in determining the sincerity of a person's moral beliefs - these could include feelings of guilt, shame, remorse, unease and conscience after the event, or actions occasioned by such feelings.

Horsburgh, in an attempt to examine Hare's "degrees of assent", also argues that the satisfaction of such criteria

as remorse, feelings of guilt, and repentance is "sufficient to dispose us to say that we are concerned with a case of assent to a moral rule."[45] Though claiming that "conformity is an essential part of the criterion of full assent," he admits, "There are times when we attach more weight to remorse than we do to conformity in our judgements of relative fullness of assent," and goes on to make the important point that we sometimes "attribute a higher degree of assent to a person after he has violated a moral rule than we did before," i.e. intense remorse can be more convincing than mere conformity.[46]

Mortimore[47] comments that by giving the notion of "prescribing" some independent informative value (in terms of "making a judgement, or addressing an imperative to oneself with the intention of guiding choice and action") Hare runs into difficulties, for "as soon as such an independent account is given, it begins to look exceedingly dubious that it follows from a man's prescribing, that he acts if it is physically and psychologically possible."

Such arguments certainly throw into question Hare's claim for the "centrality" of his definitions, but they also exemplify a serious and significant confusion over the ambiguous meaning of "centrality". To say that the central use of expression x is y can mean one of at least two things. It can mean that in our ordinary use of language we normally mean or imply y when we use expression x, (this will be called sense A); or it can mean that the interpretation y is logically prior to, and necessary for, all other interpretations of expression x (sense B). Thus, to claim that "I believe I ought to do x"

logically entails doing x (if capable of doing so), because this is required by the "central" use of "ought" could be

1. in sense A, to claim that this is how we usually use "ought" in our ordinary language,

or 2. in sense B, to claim that without this logically prior and necessary use of "ought", we should not be able to derive any other uses.

The relationship between these two senses is clearly often extremely tenuous, for there is no reason why the logically central use (sense B) of an expression need be identical with the linguistically central use (sense A).

Hare's critics, as the arguments quoted above show, have largely ignored this distinction, and have interpreted his reference to "central uses" in sense A; their criticism is along the lines that this is not necessarily what we normally mean or imply when we use these concepts. Hare himself must bear some responsibility for this confusion, as he does not always for his own part distinguish clearly between senses A and B. On close examination, however, it appears that his meaning is more fairly interpreted in most cases in sense B.

In this connection it is significant that Hare refers to "perfect specimens", "original meanings" and "primary, logical interest", as well as to "central uses", in the extracts already quoted; such expressions tend to suggest sense B rather than sense A.

The account that Hare gives in "The Language of Morals" of "oughts" and "value-judgements" makes it even clearer that he is trying to describe a "central use" in sense B. His

classification of three uses of "I ought to do x" (as a statement of sociological fact, or as a statement of psychological fact, or as a value-judgment) is intended to demonstrate the "primary logical interest" of the third "evaluative" use, since the first two uses, when expanded, must always contain a reference to the third use, which "shows that there must be some sense of that original judgement which is not exhausted by (1) and (2)." (L.M. 11.2-3.)

Hare makes it plain, in fact, that this is a logical point and not simply one about common usage:-

> "I do not in the least wish to deny that moral judgements are sometimes used non-evaluatively, in my sense. All I wish to assert is that they are sometimes used evaluatively, and that it is this use which gives them the special characteristics to which I have drawn attention; and that, if it were not for this use, it would be impossible to give a meaning to the other uses." (L.M. 11.3)

A similar argument could be developed for the "central use" (in sense B) of "sincerely assenting to a command", (i.e. that if this notion in its "primary logical" sense did not imply some decision to act, then it would be impossible to give a meaning to the other uses) but Hare does not elaborate this point.

It is mistaken then to attack Hare's account of "ought", "value-judgments" and "sincere assent" on the grounds that there are equally "central" (in sense A) uses of these terms. Hare in effect grants this point by contrasting his "holy or angelic moral language" with "human moral language" - "we have found for ourselves a language which shares our weaknesses, and gives where we do." (F.R. 5.5) Any attack therefore has to concentrate on Hare's claim for the <u>logical</u> centrality of his

definitions, and in the next chapter an attempt will be made to challenge Hare's account of "ought".

One serious limitation which is imposed by the interpretation of Hare's "central uses" in sense B is that he is thereby prevented from saying anything very significant about akrasia. He can claim that, in terms of his "central uses" of "ought", "value-judgements" and "sincere assent" (in sense B), akrasia is logically impossible, but this does not take us very far because, in studying the phenomenon of akrasia, we are more concerned with "central uses" in sense A; in other words, we are interested in what men normally mean when they say that they ought to do x, what state of mind they are describing, and what kind of judgement they are making. It is the contours of the ordinary language concepts of morality that are in question when we examine cases of apparent akrasia, not the logical priorities of an angelic language. It may well be that the "central uses" of Hare's angelic concepts are rarely if ever used in ordinary human discourse; certainly, as Gardiner, Horsburgh and Mortimore argue, there is no reason to suppose that they are the linguistically central uses, for other uses may be said to be equally, if not more, "central" in sense A. Hare's account therefore can say little about the problem of akrasia, which arises in the context of everyday human discourse and conduct.

(b) Ability to Act

At one important point in Hare's argument, he does appear to be talking of "central uses" in sense A rather than B. This is when he introduces the notion of psychological

impossibility:-

> "... typical cases of 'moral weakness' are cases where a man cannot do what he thinks he ought." (F.R. 5.1)

> "... the typical case of moral weakness, as opposed to that of hypocrisy, is a case of 'ought but can't.'" (F.R. 5.8)

Hare makes it quite clear that he takes these cases as "typical" in sense A by saying:-

> "... the state of mind that most people are thinking of when they speak of weakness of will involves an inability, in some sense, to do what we think we ought." (F.R. 5.7)

Instances of a man thinking that he ought to do x, and then not doing it, are therefore classified either as cases of purposive backsliding or hypocrisy (where "ought" is deliberately used in an "off-colour" way, which "ceases to express a universal prescription", (F.R. 5.7)), or as cases of sheer inability or impossibility. In the case of physical inability, the imperative is simply "withdrawn altogether, as inconsistent with the admission of impossibility" (F.R. 5.8), but in the case of psychological impossibility (as with Medea and St. Paul) it is not in the agent's "psychological power to act on the imperatives that are entailed by the moral judgements which they are making," (F.R. 5.7) and consequently the "ought" "does not have to be withdrawn, but only down-graded." (F.R. 5.8)

This attempted classification and interpretation of cases of moral weakness is unsatisfactory on two main counts.

1. Can all cases of moral weakness be classified either as cases of hypocrisy or as cases of psychological impossibility? The possible extent of the notion of akrasia and the range of cases that could fall within it will be discussed in Chapter IV, but at this stage

it is sufficient to list the possible cases suggested by Matthews[48] - putting off the evil moment, backsliding, irresolution, being persuaded against one's better judgment, being too easily discouraged, being unable to bring oneself to do something, and being overcome with desire. Such a classification will need further discussion, but it does strongly suggest that Hare's simple dichotomy fails to do justice to the complexities of the concept.

2. Can "ought but can't" be called a "typical case of moral weakness"? Is it in fact a case of moral weakness at all? Moral weakness implies blameworthiness and possible censure, but as Matthews argues:-[49]

> "If it is literally true that the agent was powerless, could not help himself, could not do anything else, then however much he blames himself, we would be as little inclined to reproach and reprove as we would in a clear case of kleptomania."

Far from being a typical case, "the nearer this approaches to real impossibility, the less it seems like a case of weakness of will." Or, as Kenny succinctly puts it, "... this is more than weakness of will, this is paralysis."[50]

Lukes[51] makes a similar criticism of Hare's position, arguing that it entails a "crude, psychological determinism" which fails to distinguish between "the compulsive neurotic or even the man overcome by passion or emotion, on the one hand, and the average backslider on the other." He also points out that Hare is thereby driven to maintaining that "when sincere men are faced by temptation, if they resist it they act freely, but if they do not, they are unable (in a deeper sense) to do so."

In other words, Hare has failed to recognise here that a moral decision presupposes some degree of freedom. If that freedom is not present and the man cannot act otherwise, the situation is not a moral one, and the question of moral weakness cannot arise.

In both (a) and (b), therefore, Hare's apparent appeal to linguistically "central uses" is not supported by our normal understanding of the term "moral weakness".

C. Conclusions

This analysis of Hare's arguments concerning the possibility of akrasia has revealed a number of limitations. The terminology which he uses to describe moral decision-making is odd and inappropriate in several respects. His stipulative definitions involve a radical ambiguity over "central uses", and are mainly designed to construct an interlocking, axiomatic, angelic language, which bears little relation to "what happens" in "the world that we are talking about", to ordinary moral discourse, or to the practical problem of akrasia. Where he makes direct reference to akrasia, his account appears particularly unsatisfactory in terms both of his classification and of his reliance upon the notion of psychological impossibility.

Like Socrates, however, Hare draws our attention to several areas crucial to any examination of akrasia which promise to yield fruitful results if explored further. These fall under four main headings:-

a) Feelings of guilt and remorse are (grudgingly) admitted to provide a criterion of sorts for "sincere assent" and "thinking that one ought ..." if the action itself is not performed, for there are "degrees of sincere assent". Whether failure to act on an "ought"-judgment makes that judgment less sincere or not will be discussed in the following chapter; but the introduction of guilt and remorse (and, by implication, of "conscience" also) into Hare's account may offer a possible way of demonstrating how a man may be said to believe sincerely that he ought to do x, even though he fails to do x. This point will be developed in Chapters III - V, while some possible reasons for Hare's failure to make explicit reference to "conscience" in his account will be suggested at the end of the following chapter.

b) Hare's preoccupation with degrees of sincerity and insincerity raises a further important question, to which an answer will be attempted in Chapter V. Even if, contra Socrates and Hare, the possibility of akrasia is admitted, is some form of insincerity, self-deception or intellectual dishonesty a necessary feature of moral weakness?

c) Hare's claim that "typical" cases of moral weakness involve psychological impossibility appears unjustified. Nevertheless, some attention will need to be given in Chapter IV to the question of whether and in what sense a man who exhibits moral weakness "could have acted otherwise".

d) The emphasis which Hare places upon the "prescriptive" nature and function of moral language, and upon the part played by "imperatives" and "commands" within that language, must be

considered in any discussion of akrasia. Some objections to Hare's particular version of prescriptivism have been raised in this section, and some more general features of prescriptivism will be examined in the following chapter. Although Hare's version and the terminology it uses has been shown to create serious difficulties, an account of akrasia in which moral principles and considerations are shown to exercise some kind of prescriptive authority over moral agents seems to offer a more convincing and recognisable picture of moral judgment and decision-making than does the Socratic account.

Thus, Hare's work is important in pin-pointing some issues of central importance to the problem of akrasia, but his account resembles that of Socrates in suffering from two main weaknesses - an insufficiently comprehensive view of moral judgment, decision-making and conflict, and an undue dependence upon arbitrary, linguistic stipulations.

As far as the logical impossibility of akrasia is concerned, Hare can only attempt to demonstrate this within the confines of his axiomatic, angelic language - a limited enterprise, which does not deny the possibility or meaningfulness of an ordinary mortal thinking that he ought to do x, and then not doing it.

This chapter began by demonstrating how different ethical traditions have placed differing degrees of emphasis upon akrasia as a philosophical and practical problem. Socrates

and Hare were then taken as exemplary proponents of the view that akrasia cannot logically occur; their arguments to this effect were shown to be unsatisfactory in various respects, though at the same time suggestive of certain approaches which might further illuminate a study of akrasia. It is now necessary to proceed beyond the negative conclusion that akrasia has not been shown to be logically impossible, and to attempt to establish that it is not only logically possible but also a fact of life.

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48. Matthews, G., "Weakness of Will", Mind, LXXV, (1966), pp. 405-19.

49. ibid, p.415.

50. Kenny, A., Will, Freedom and Power, (Blackwell, Oxford, 1975), p.105.

51. op. cit., p.108.

CHAPTER III - "OUGHTS", "CONSCIENCE" AND THE POSSIBILITY OF AKRASIA

The aim of this chapter is to establish that it is both logically and empirically possible for a man to believe that he ought (in its most "full-blooded" sense) to do x, yet not to do x (although able to do so).

To this end, certain logical and central features of "ought" will be suggested and examined in Section 1. These will then be related to the notion of "conscience" in Section 2. The analyses of "ought" and "conscience", when taken together, it will be argued, demonstrate sufficiently the logical and empirical possibility of akrasia.

1. Features of "Ought"

"Ought" can be used in both moral and non-moral contexts, as Hare (e.g. L.M. 10.2) and other moral philosophers have noticed. Less commonly noticed, however, has been the fact that "ought" can be used in non-moral contexts in two very different ways. The word is, as Edgley comments, "indifferent as between practical and theoretical judgments ... and in the theoretical interpretation (it) functions in the same general way as in any other prediction in which it is said that something ought to happen ..."[1]

The following examples illustrate what appear to be the three main uses of "ought":-

(a) You ought to tell the truth.

(b) You ought to keep your eye on the ball.

(c) You ought to be there by this time tomorrow.

(b) and (c) are non-moral "oughts". (b) refers to the advisability of keeping one's eye on the ball, this being the suggested means of achieving the implicit aim of hitting the ball effectively. (c) is Edgley's case of a "prediction in which it is said that something ought to happen," i.e. your being

there by this time tomorrow. By contrast, (a) suggests a moral obligation to tell the truth. For convenience, we may label these three uses (a) "moral", (b) "practical", and (c) "predictive".

(Although these are the most obvious interpretations of the three examples other interpretations are possible, e.g. (a) could be a "practical ought" if truth-telling were being advised as a means of achieving a particular end (gaining a reputation for honesty, for instance), or it could be a "predictive ought" if the sentence is merely stating what is likely to happen (e.g. as a result of conditioning, hypnosis, drugs etc.); (b) similarly could be "predictive", while (c) could conceivably be "moral" or "practical". This possible variety of interpretation, depending upon the particular context, does not however alter the fact that these three distinctive uses exist.)

It is important to consider whether any features can be discovered that are common to all three uses. Three such features appear as possible candidates, and will be examined in turn. They are:-

A. the implied backing of justificatory reasons,

B. the implied uncertainty of outcome,

C. the implied likelihood of countervailing factors.

A. Implied Backing of Justificatory Reasons: The Distinction between Justifying and Motivating Factors

(i) Each of the above "ought"-sentences implies the existence of underlying reasons, which could be invoked if required. This can be illustrated by comparing the sentences (a), (b) and (c)

with the corresponding commands or imperative forms:-

(a)' Tell the truth.

(b)' Keep your eye on the ball.

(c)' Be there by this time tomorrow.

No appeal to reasons is necessarily implied in such commands, a point noted by both Nowell-Smith and Hare. According to Nowell-Smith:-

> "... commands differ from ought-sentences in that a man who gives a command is not logically bound to give any reasons why it should be obeyed. On the other hand if a man says 'You ought ...' or 'It's worth ...' he must (logically) be able to give reasons." [2]

Hare argues similarly:-

> "Plain imperatives do not <u>have</u> to have reasons or grounds, though they normally do have; but 'ought'-judgements, strictly speaking, would be being misused if the demand for reasons or grounds were thought of as out of place ..." [3] (author's italics)

Nowell-Smith and Hare here are confining their comments to "moral" and "practical" "oughts", but the same characteristic can also be detected in "predictive oughts". The prediction, "You ought to be there by this time tomorrow" invites the reply, "Why? How do you know? How can you be sure?" This implied backing of reasons is what distinguishes "ought" predictions from mere hunches, guesses and feelings about what is going to happen.

The type of reason invoked by an "ought"-sentence will, of course, vary according to the type of "ought"-sentence. "Moral oughts" imply the backing of reasons that refer to empirical requirements for the achievement of particular goals; and "predictive oughts" imply the backing of empirical reasons which suggest the likelihood of the prediction coming true.

(ii) Whatever type of reason is invoked, its function will be justificatory rather than motivational. This crucial distinction is well illustrated in Frankena's discussion of obligation and motivation:-

> "It seems to me, at any rate, that we must distinguish two kinds of reasons for action, 'exciting reasons' and 'justifying reasons', to use Hutcheson's terms.[4] When A asks, 'Why should I give Smith a ride?' B may give answers of two different kinds. He may say, 'Because you promised to,' or he may say, 'Because, if you do, he will remember you in his will.' In the first case he offers a justification of the action, in the second a motive for doing it. In other words, A's 'Why should I ..?' and 'Why ought I..?' are ambiguous questions. They may be asking for an ethical justification of the action proposed, or they may be asking what motives there are for his doing it. 'Should' and 'ought' likewise have two meanings which are prima facie distinct: a moral one and a motivational one." 5

This distinction is of considerable significance for the present discussion, and indeed for the whole problem of akrasia, but Frankena is surely mistaken in stating that both "should" and "ought" have ambiguous meanings. "Should" is certainly ambiguous in this way, but "ought" in all its uses appeals to a justificatory, not a motivational, backing.

"Moral oughts" clearly imply the backing of justificatory reasons. If I am told that I ought to tell the truth, and I ask why, the sort of reason that I am asking for is one which will justify the "ought"-sentence (e.g. "Because rational morality depends upon people telling the truth in normal circumstances.") I am not asking for a motivational explanation or incentive for why I should tell the truth (e.g. intrinsically, "because you are a person with a passion for precision and exactitude", or extrinsically, "because it will pay you to do so.") "Why ought I to tell the truth?" is not therefore

ambiguous in the way that "Why should I tell the truth?" is. Frankena in fact grants this point when he comments on the apparent meaningfulness of the question, "Why should I do what I morally ought to do?"[6] The question can only be meaningful if "what I morally ought to do" is accepted as being not ambiguous and as having a possible different meaning from "what I should do."

The same distinction holds for "practical" as well as "moral oughts". It is perfectly possible and meaningful to ask, "Why should I do what I 'practically' ought to do?" e.g. keep my eye on the ball. If I ask, "Why ought I to keep my eye on the ball?" I am again asking for an answer in terms of justification rather than motivation (e.g. "because that will improve the mechanics of your swing", rather than "because you'll enjoy doing it.")

With "predictive oughts" the distinction is not relevant as no course of action is being suggested, (though an obligation to believe what the evidence indicates is perhaps implied). In this case, questions of motivation do not really arise however, and the implied reasons backing the "ought"-sentence are indisputably justificatory, e.g. "You ought to be there by this time tomorrow." "Why?" "Because the railway timetable says so."

The distinction between motivating and justifying factors, and the logical connection between justificatory reasons and "ought"-sentences have particularly important implications for "moral oughts" and for the problem of akrasia, which now comes within the bounds of logical possibility.

If I believe that I ought to do x, I acknowledge that there are good justificatory reasons for my doing x, which will

refer to some generalised principle: for example, I ought to visit my colleague who is ill in hospital. Why? Because people in hospital like to be visited, remembered, cheered up, etc. I am thus signifying my agreement with the principle that visiting hospital patients is in general a good thing, but I am not necessarily signifying any personal inclination to visit my colleague. I may not have the time, energy or desire to do any such visiting - perhaps hospitals fill me with dread, and I have no wish to come within a mile of one - but this does not prevent me from saying (meaningfully and"full-bloodedly") that I think I ought to make the visit.

The distinction between justificatory and motivational factors, therefore, opens up the logical possibility of a man not doing what he thinks he ought to do, because he does not want to do what he thinks he ought to do. Edgley makes a similar point in discussing reasons for action:-

> "There are, I think, ... reasons of a sort such that their being some particular person's reasons for doing something does not imply that he wants to do that thing. Moral reasons seem to me to be of this kind."7

Does it then follow from this analysis of "ought"-sentences that "moral oughts" are not "prescriptive" or "action-guiding" in the way that Hare and others have claimed that they are? Care must be taken at this point to distinguish between the logical issue and the empirical issue, and between different senses of "prescriptive" and "action-guiding".

If the justificatory reasons backing a "moral ought" coincide with, or help to provide, a person's wants and motives, that "ought" will in an obvious sense be "action-guiding". To

quote Edgley again:-

> "It may, of course, be the case that if someone's reasons for doing something are moral reasons he also, as a matter of fact, wants to do that thing and perhaps wants to do it <u>because</u> he thinks he morally ought to do it."[8]

In practice this is probably what frequently happens; our wants and motives may provide us with reasons why we <u>should</u> do what we <u>morally</u> ought to do. If I think that I morally ought to tell the truth, I may well decide that I <u>will</u> do so, for a variety of motives (e.g. I may enjoy being precise and correct, or I may think that I shall profit by telling the truth, or I may simply <u>want</u> to do what I think is morally right.)

Motivational factors, then, may often fail to conflict with justificatory reasons, and may indeed be directly provided by them at times, in which case "moral oughts" are certainly "action-guiding". But this does not, and need not, always happen. It is always possible to ask, "Why should I do what I morally ought to do?" and it is consequently always possible that justificatory reasons may conflict with wants and motives. Empirically, therefore, "moral oughts" no doubt often are "action-guiding" and "prescriptive" in the sense that they express what one intends to do, or what one intends that someone else should do. But this is a contingent fact, not a necessary truth.

A similar distinction between logical and empirical features of "moral oughts " must be made when considering arguments such as Nowell-Smith's[9] that "I ought" expresses some sort of decision, commitment, or "pro-attitude" in favour of doing what I think I ought to do. As Frankena comments:-

> "No doubt ... a firsthand 'I ought' does normally express commitment or decision on the speaker's part, for one would not normally go through the process of moral deliberation that concludes with 'I ought' if he were not sufficiently devoted to the moral enterprise for this conclusion to coincide with his decision. This does not mean, however, that 'I ought' logically entails 'I shall'; it may only pragmatically presuppose or contextually imply this." 10

In other words, the contingent fact that people who engage in moral deliberation tend to decide to do what they think they ought to do again cannot be turned into a logical truth about the nature of "ought".

Similar objections can be brought against the view that "moral oughts" are in some sense "overriding", "superior" and "dominant" vis-a-vis non-moral considerations.[11] If this is an empirical claim, then it may well be true of the majority of people who take the trouble to decide what they morally ought to do that these "oughts" normally are "overriding" psychologically, but it seems equally clear that this is not <u>always</u> the case, for if it were one could never experience moral conflict or yield to temptation; there is no reason to suppose that for some people aesthetic considerations and principles, for example, are not at times psychologically dominant over moral ones. To attempt to turn the claim into a logical truth, on the other hand, is even less satisfactory, as it leads only to the vacuous conclusion that moral considerations are morally superior to non-moral considerations. Both the empirical and the logical interpretation of the "overriding" claim can thus be queried, as Thalberg succinctly argues:-

> "... I have no idea what this superiority or authority could be. Are moral considerations supposed to be motivationally more potent than any other? That is the very problem here: moral principles do not always win out. And it would be completely uninformative to be told only that moral reasons have greater <u>moral</u> authority." 12 (author's italics)

"Oughts" and justificatory reasons, then, may be empirically "prescriptive" (and "overriding") at times, but are they in no sense logically "prescriptive"? The critique of Hare's argument denied that "ought"-judgments are logically prescriptive in the sense of "assenting to first-person imperatives", but logical prescriptivity need not be interpreted so strictly or idiosyncratically. One may reject Hare's interpretation while agreeing with him that the primary function of moral concepts like "good", "right" and "ought" is to prescribe rather than to describe. Indeed, there would be no reason to feel that akrasia constituted any sort of problem if such moral concepts were held to be wholly descriptive. My belief that I ought (or that it is good or right for me) to visit my friend in hospital refers to an obligation that I feel "exists" for me, but if the "existence" of this obligation is seen as a purely descriptive "fact" about my situation in the same way that a medical diagnosis is a factual description of my friend's situation, then there is logically no reason to expect me (or my friend) to act in any particular way with regard to those "facts". A similar point was made concerning the Socratic (or Platonic) notion of "apprehending" or "recognising" the Ideal Forms; if purely descriptive, such apprehension and recognition can by themselves have no logical implications for action. This will be further discussed in Section 2.

Akrasia becomes a problem, therefore, precisely because of the difficulties that arise from any attempt to give a wholly descriptivist account of moral concepts. Recognising an obligation has a different logical grammar from recognising a face,

for it entails that I feel the obligation to impinge upon or be binding upon me and thereby to require action. This prescriptive entailment is part of what is meant by recognising an obligation, but nothing of this sort is entailed in recognising a face.

Similarly the notion of accepting there to be good, justificatory reasons for doing x, which relate to a principle with which I agree (implied in the making of an "ought"-judgment), is "prescriptive" in the sense that it must have some sort of logical connection with doing or deciding to do x; the acceptance and agreement must amount to more than a descriptive, verbal formula. If I accept the desirability of cheering my friend up as a reason that justifies my visiting him in hospital, because I agree with the general principle that invalid friends ought to be helped, encouraged, not ignored, etc., I am acknowledging the prescriptive, normative pressure which I feel to be upon me and which is necessitated by my acceptance of reasons and principles as being justificatory. I do not see the situation simply as a collection of descriptive facts, but as a set of factors which weigh prescriptively with me.

The prescriptive nature of "oughts" and other moral concepts will be examined further in the following sections of this chapter. At this point, however, it should be noted that "prescriptivity", in the sense that has been outlined, does not blur the distinction between justificatory and motivational factors in the way that Hare's "assenting to first-person imperatives" does. The backing of justificatory reasons, which it has been argued is a common feature of all "ought"-sentences, is certainly "prescriptive" when "moral" (and also "practical")

"oughts" are involved, but this does not preclude the possibility of motivational factors leading a man to want to act other than as is "prescribed"; indeed, the following sections will try to show that counter-tendencies of this kind are implied by the logic of "ought"-sentences. However, the logical connection between "ought"-sentences and justificatory reasons, when considered alongside the logical distinction between justificatory and motivational factors, is sufficient in itself to cast serious doubt upon claims that akrasia is a logical impossibility.

B. Implied Uncertainty of Outcome

The three examples of "ought"-sentences given above, (a), (b), (c), have already been compared with the corresponding commands or imperative uses, (a'), (b'), (c'). They can also be compared with the corresponding future indicative uses, as follows:-

(a^2) You will tell the truth.

(b^2) You will keep your eye on the ball.

(c^2) You will be there by this time tomorrow.

One obvious difference between (a), (b), (c), and (a^2), (b^2), (c^2) is that the former express a degree of doubt as to the outcome, whereas the latter do not. "You ought to tell the truth (or keep your eye on the ball), but of course you may not" is not self-contradictory, unlike "You will tell the truth (or keep your eye on the ball), but of course you may not." A similar difference exists between (c) and (c^2); "You ought to be there

by this time tomorrow" is a prediction about what may happen, whereas (c^2) is a pronouncement about what will happen.

An essential feature of "ought"-sentences, therefore, which is brought out by this comparison, is that they imply a degree of doubt and uncertainty concerning the outcome or fulfilment of what ought to happen. This feature is underlined in everyday speech by our placing particular emphasis upon the word "ought", or by adding the word "really": for example, "I (really) ought to stay in and work tonight - but in fact I think I'll go to the pictures," or predictively, "England (really) ought to win this Test series - but cricket being an uncertain game, they may well lose."

The existence of the past-tense use "ought to have" is a further argument in support of the view that "ought"-sentences imply uncertainty of outcome. Let us consider the past-tense uses of our three examples:-

(a^3) You ought to have told the truth.

(b^3) You ought to have kept your eye on the ball.

(c^3) You ought to have been there by ten o'clock ("this time tomorrow" is inapplicable here).

The implication in each case is that what ought to have happened did not in fact happen (i.e. you did not tell the truth, keep your eye on the ball, or arrive by ten o'clock.) While"you ought to have ..." is not in all cases logically incompatible with "you did ..." (e.g. "By giving yourself up, you did what you ought to have done,") the past-tense of "ought" is normally used to cast reproach for what was not done, or to express surprise at what did not happen. This use is a further indication

that "ought" in general implies the possible, probable or (at times) certain non-fulfilment of what ought to be (or have been) done, or what ought to be (or have been) the case.

This uncertainty of outcome stems from the previous feature of "ought"-sentences, the implied backing of justificatory reasons. When "ought"-sentences are used, the backing of such reasons is implied, but they are recognised as being insufficient to guarantee the outcome; this is because of motivational factors in (a) and (b), and unforeseeable, chance factors in (c). Edgley illustrates this point in comparing "must" with "ought":-

> "The word 'must' expresses that pressure in which there is conclusive reason for someone to do something ...; the word 'ought' that pressure in which there is good (but not necessarily conclusive) reason to do something."[13]

If the reasons implied by "ought"-sentences are "not necessarily conclusive", the outcome of what ought to happen thereby becomes uncertain. This means that "ought" in its "moral", "practical" and "predictive" uses does not imply "shall" or "will"; what it does imply is "may not".

There are two further indications that "moral oughts" in particular possess this feature of uncertainty. The first arises from the notion of a free moral agent. If moral action presupposes freedom of choice and decision, and is incompatible with coercion, it follows that moral actions can never be infallibly predicted or guaranteed, for this is to sacrifice the necessary element of open-endedness in such actions. Only by using methods like conditioning, hypnosis and brainwashing could predictions and guarantees be confidently made, and it

then becomes highly questionable whether the resultant behaviour can be called "action", let alone "moral action". To deny that "ought" implies "may not" in moral contexts, on the other hand, is to argue that infallible predictions of moral actions are not only logically possible but logically necessitated by the force of "ought". The notion of a free moral agent, however, seems to require the logical possibility of a man not doing what he thinks he ought to do. He may have freely reached the conclusion that he ought to do x, but this process of deliberation still cannot infallibly determine his subsequent behaviour, if that behaviour is to be called "moral action". Empirically, no doubt, we do normally implement our moral decisions, as was mentioned above in A., but logically as free moral agents we must be able to choose not to do so.

The second indication that "moral oughts" suggest uncertainty of outcome is provided by the logical grammar of decisions and resolutions. We make New Year resolutions rather than decisions, because we recognise the difficulty of what we are attempting and because resolutions, but not decisions, can logically be "broken". The old lag resolves rather than decides to "go straight"; the philandering husband resolves rather than decides to "turn over a new leaf". This is because, as McGuire puts it, "it is an analytic truth that a man can decide to do only those things which he believes to be relatively simple."[14] (author's italics)

This truth can easily be demonstrated in non-moral contexts. The reason why we smile at a nine-year old's declaration that he has decided to be Prime Minister when he grows up is

because we find incongruous the implied ease of achievement and certainty of outcome contained in the word "decided"; if the word "resolved" were substituted, we might still be amused (or perhaps impressed) by the child's ambition, but not because we felt he had ignored all the difficulties.

Similarly, in a moral context, if we think that we ought to be less bad-tempered, we may on January 1st resolve to be less bad-tempered, while realising the difficulties of effecting such a personality change. We do not speak of New Year decisions, precisely because of the difficulties and uncertainties surrounding "moral oughts". To quote McGuire again:-

> "... if it is agreed that the notion of a conflict between duty and inclination is central to ethics, we then have good reason for giving first place in our schema of the structure of the language of morals to the notion of a resolve rather than to that of a decision. For moral rules do not exhort a man to do that which he would do in any case. Their function rather is to demand of us that we do that which otherwise we should not do; that is, broadly speaking, their function is to demand of us certain things which are difficult."[15]

McGuire's argument ignores the important distinction between deciding or resolving that ... and deciding or resolving to ..., which will be examined later. However, his distinction between deciding to ... and resolving to ..., and his linking of the latter with "moral oughts", further emphasise the uncertainty of outcome of those "oughts". Some possible reasons for this uncertainty of outcome have been briefly mentioned in this section, and will now be elaborated in Section C.

C. Implied Likelihood of Countervailing Factors

The third suggested feature common to all uses of "ought" also supplies a generalised explanation for the second feature. The reason why all uses of "ought" imply uncertainty of outcome is because of the implied likely existence of countervailing factors in each case.

With "predictive oughts" the countervailing factors are possible or likely empirical conditions which make it less certain that the prediction will be fulfilled. "You ought to be there by this time tomorrow" suggests the unspoken qualification, "but of course the weather could turn worse and delay you," or, "but of course you never can tell with British Rail!" The person making the prediction cannot control or even estimate the effect of these conditions; he can only make allowance for their possible effect by using the word "ought" rather than "will".

With "practical oughts" the countervailing factors are non-moral inclinations and tendencies which may prevent the translation of the "ought" into action. "You ought to keep your eye on the ball" implicitly acknowledges the difficulty of obeying this precept because of the natural tendency to look up before hitting the ball in order to anticipate its flight.

As for "moral oughts", some brief suggestions about the nature of the countervailing factors involved have been made in A. and B. Motivational and justificatory factors may not coincide, and one may accordingly not want to do what one feels one ought to do. The reason why moral rules tend to demand things that are difficult is because duty and inclination

tend to conflict. These suggestions can be further developed and illustrated by examining a number of concepts closely related to "moral oughts", each of which can be said in some way to presuppose counter-inclinations. The argument is similar, though not identical, with each concept - obligations, duties, rules and ideals.

The key to "obligations" is to be found in its Latin derivation: obligare - to bind, fasten or fetter. Obligations then suggest that which is bound to or fastened upon one, but bindings and fastenings are necessary constraints only in situations where attempted escape is likely, or at least possible. Constraints of various kinds, therefore, provide a backing for obligations, and the function of these constraints is to oppose the possible wants or counter-inclinations that may operate against the fulfilment of the obligation. At the heart of the concept lies tension between what ought to be done and what there is a tendency to do, between what one ought to do and what one is likely to want to do; without this tension the concept ceases to have meaning.

Very similar to obligations are duties, which Moore describes as applying to those useful actions "which it is more useful to praise and to enforce by sanctions, since they are actions which there is a temptation to omit."[16] Frankena, commenting on this, concludes that to say that B is A's duty "presupposes that A is tempted not to do it."[17] Duties then appear to depend for part of their meaning upon the same tension that was noted in the case of obligations. Duties do not refer to actions which we necessarily want to perform; they imply temptations and counter-inclinations, which is but another way

of stating that "ought" implies "may not" and "may not want to".

The notion of rules for regulating behaviour also presupposes constraints upon wants and counter-inclinations. If there were no possible temptation or disposition to act contrarily to what the rule specified, rules would be unnecessary and the concept would become superfluous. The same can be said of prescriptions.

As for ideals, these are by definition difficult to attain. As Thalberg says of having ideals:-

> "... part of what we mean is that we have, and expect to have, difficulty in conforming to our ideal. Not only do we expect occasional lack of success in our endeavours, but we foresee that, at times, we will be disinclined to try ... 'I ought (ideally) to try' implies 'I might not'."[18]

This cluster of concepts, then, to which "moral oughts" are closely related, each implies uncertainty of outcome resulting from the pressure of counter-inclinations. To show that such concepts possess this feature is thus another way of drawing the distinction between justificatory and motivational factors, for all of the concepts discussed mirror "moral oughts" in underlining this distinction and the tension that it can cause; without the likelihood of this tension, such concepts would lose their meaning. In each case justificatory reasons are presupposed which support the obligations, duties, rules and ideals, but these justificatory reasons can never guarantee the required action, because they do not necessarily supply the motivational incentives which may be needed to overcome the possible counter-inclinations. (What the nature of these counter-inclinations might be, and what would be involved in overcoming them, will be discussed in Chapter IV, when possible

explanations of akrasia will be examined.)

D. The "Centrality" of Features A, B and C

The foregoing argument has attempted to pick out three characteristic features of "ought"-sentences in general, and to examine these features with particular reference to "moral" "ought"-sentences. Taken together, the three features constitute a defence of the logical possibility of akrasia. "Ought"-sentences imply the backing of justificatory reasons, but (in the case of "moral" and "practical oughts") these may not coincide with motivational factors. The outcome of the "ought"-judgment becomes uncertain because of the implied countervailing factors, and the logical possibility is thereby opened up of a person sincerely believing that he ought to do x, but failing to do x (though able in all respects to do so). (The agent's "sincere belief" and "ability" will be further examined in Chapter IV.)

A number of points at which this argument conflicts with Hare's account have already been discussed in some detail, notably the issue of "imperative" or "prescriptive" "ought"-judgements. The crucial question of "central usage" must now be reconsidered in the light of the suggested features A, B and C.

In Section 3 of Chapter II it was seen that, according to Hare, to make the value-judgment "I ought to do x" was to assent sincerely to the prescription "Let me do x", and that to assent sincerely to the prescription was to do x (if physically and psychologically able). Hare claimed that this was the "central", "evaluative" use of "ought", and we took this to mean

logically rather than linguistically "central". In order to challenge Hare's account it is necessary to show that the three features of "oughts" that have been discussed are more "central" than the uses which he describes; the logical possibility of akrasia will thus be firmly established.

This can be done by going one better than Hare and claiming "centrality" in both senses, i.e. logical and linguistic. Hare does not claim that his account of "angelic oughts" necessarily reflects common usage, and we have seen how this limits the significance of what he has to say about akrasia. The three features of "ought" discussed in this section <u>are</u>, on the other hand, linguistically central. The examples that have been used to illustrate these features do reflect common usage and do not depend for their meaning upon such "non-linguistic" devices as first-person imperatives. The implied backing of justificatory reasons, uncertainty of outcome, and existence of countervailing factors are part of what is meant by "ought", as it is used in everyday speech. This is shown most clearly by the comparison of the three "ought"-sentences (a), (b) and (c) with the corresponding imperative sentences (a'), (b') and (c') and the corresponding future indicative sentences (a^2), (b^2) and (c^2).

But are these features logically as well as linguistically central? Do they represent logically prior senses of "ought", without the existence of which other senses could not be derived? Or do they refer only to senses which are "downgraded" and not "full-blooded", which Hare could account for on the grounds that "we have found for ourselves a language

which shares our weaknesses, and gives where we do." (F.R. 5.5)

The easiest way of establishing the logical primacy of these three features is by noting that they are linguistically central to all uses of "ought", unlike Hare's "angelic" features, which could be applied only to "moral" and "practical oughts". The difficulties of interpreting "moral" and "practical" "ought"-sentences in terms of "sincerely assenting to imperatives" have already been discussed, but to interpret "predictive" "ought"-sentences in this way is not merely difficult but impossible; no imperatives can be deduced from or written into factual predictions of what is likely to happen. Hare ignores this common and important use of "ought", and thereby seriously weakens his analysis. The three logical features of "oughts" discussed in this section, on the other hand, apply equally well to "predictive" uses as to "moral" and "practical" uses, and accordingly have a much stronger claim to logical centrality than do Hare's features.

The conclusion to which this section leads, therefore, is that if A, B and C do indeed reflect features which are logically and linguistically central to our concept of "ought", as has been argued, they suggest that there is nothing self-contradictory or even surprising about the statement that a man may fail to do that which he believes he ought to do.

2. "Oughts" and "Conscience"

The arguments advanced in Section 1 for the logical possibility of akrasia depend largely upon logical features which it has been claimed are central to the concept of "ought". The linguistic nature of these arguments, however, may fail to carry total conviction against the common-sense view that, in practice, if we do not do what we say we believe we ought to do, we cannot "really" believe that we ought to do it.

In order to demonstrate that the arguments in Section 1 are applicable to practical experience, and that this inquiry is in Hare's words "at one and the same time about language and about what happens, (for) one cannot study language in a philosophical way without studying the world that we are talking about", this section will accordingly be devoted to a study of a phenomenon which certainly "happens" in "the world that we are talking about", and which seems to have close connections both with "ought"-judgments and with akrasia - the phenomenon of conscience. The study will attempt to show how the phenomenon of conscience:-

A. reflects and illustrates the logical features of "ought" and **B.** constitutes in itself a strong argument for the logical and empirical possibility of akrasia.

A. "Conscience" and the logical features of "ought"

A number of philosophical problems surround the notion of conscience. Those problems which are of most relevance to akrasia can conveniently be examined under the headings of topics

discussed in Section 1 in connection with logical features of "ought", namely:-

(i) justificatory reasons and principles

(ii) motivation and countervailing factors

(iii) uncertainty of outcome

(iv) prescriptivity and authority.

(i) "Conscience" and justificatory reasons and principles

Before the relationship between conscience and justificatory reasons and principles can be explored, a fundamental distinction must be drawn between two senses of "conscience", for the term is used to describe two very different processes.

On the one hand it can refer to guilt reactions and feelings of anxiety or shame stemming from unexamined and unconscious sources, as in the Freudian account of the superego. Thus I could in this sense be said to "have a bad conscience" or "be troubled by my conscience" if I feel irrational anxiety or guilt when disagreeing with somebody in authority, because of childhood experiences I may have had of authority figures; the operation of "conscience" in this sense is a non-judgmental, causal reflex. On the other hand, "conscience" is also and more frequently used to describe a rational, judgmental process, closely akin to moral reasoning. This is designated by Kolnai as:-

> "... Conscience in the established and dignified sense of moral self-criticism, judgement and belief - which essentially aspires to truth and tries to escape from error, and in fact expresses the agent's endeavour to ponder and argue his decisions in universally valid terms and to make his conduct justifiable in the open court of objective morality."[19] (author's italics)

In this sense of "conscience", part of its task is to "enforce my concrete obligations under a permanent and universal body of moral laws it apprehends as binding upon me."[20]

Clearly it is this second sense of "conscience" which is of particular relevance to the problem of akrasia, which centres around the non-enforcement of obligations and laws. But having distinguished between what may be called the "irrational" and "rational" senses of conscience, may we conclude with Kolnai that "rational" conscience has close links with justification, reasons and principles?

Such a conclusion cannot safely be reached without a more thorough analysis. "Rational" conscience is not to be simply equated with moral judgment or reasoning, as Hobbes for example supposed: "a man's conscience and his judgement is the same thing."[21] The exercise of conscience is more specific than the exercise of moral judgment or reasoning. Conscience acts, as Ryle puts it,[22] as a private monitor pronouncing verdicts upon one's own, but not other people's, behaviour. My conscience judges, condemns and rebukes me for my deviant actions; it tells me that I was wrong, or would be wrong, to do x, or that it was wrong, or would be wrong, for me to do x, but not that it would necessarily be wrong for anyone else to do, or have done, x. If conscience-verdicts, then, seem to express personalised criticisms and warnings rather than principles of universal application, can conscience be linked with justificatory reasons and principles in the way that moral "ought"-judgments are? There are at least two indications that the answer must be "yes", and that Kolnai's account is essentially correct.

a) The priority of justificatory reasons and principles

The personalised nature of conscience-verdicts does not require the severance of all links with justificatory reasons and principles. If my conscience tells me that I was wrong to have that extra drink, there are implied reasons and principles backing that verdict (provided that conscience is not being used in its "irrational", reactive sense). For me to feel guilt and remorse for having had the extra drink (i.e. for me to have a "rational" conscience about it), there must be a body of reasons and principles which I accept as justificatory, and which go to make up my conscience. To quote Kolnai again, "moral qualities and rules ... are not a function of my conscience but prior to it and constitutive of it."[23]

This priority of justificatory rules is a logical priority which brings out a further important feature of "rational" conscience - that in its role of pronouncing verdicts, it is concerned not with the formulation or re-examination of rules and principles, but with the application of rules and principles which have already been accepted.[24] This feature is doubly significant for our analysis.

Firstly it emphasises that conscience-verdicts are not passed arbitrarily upon a protesting and antagonistic offender by a judge upholding an alien set of standards. The verdicts represent the offender's own, previously accepted standards, which he feels that he has transgressed without justification; these prior standards and principles are, to him at least, both justifiable and justificatory (though they might of course be judged otherwise, and his conscience thereby as being erroneous, by others).

Secondly the implied existence of previously accepted justificatory principles picks out clearly the more specific and personalised role of conscience-verdicts compared with that of moral judgment. Conscience-verdicts act as a bridge between the generality of prior, justificatory principles and the particularity of situations in which an individual finds himself. My conscience's function is not to formulate the principle that it is wrong to endanger the lives of other people, but to apply that previously accepted principle to my particular situation and to give the verdict that I was wrong to have that extra drink before driving home.

There is then no incompatibility between "rational" conscience's concern with personal verdicts and criticisms and its concern with justificatory reasons and principles; indeed the two concerns are logically interdependent and together make up a large part of what we mean by "conscience". "Rational" conscience, however, also performs a second function which suggests even more strongly the backing of justificatory reasons.

b) Prospective conscience-judgments

One reason why we might initially doubt whether conscience-verdicts imply the backing of justificatory reasons is that the guilt, shame and remorse caused by such verdicts are feelings also associated with "irrational", reactive consciences, which lack justificatory support. Yet these feelings are appropriate, even necessary, consequences of "rational" conscience-verdicts to the effect that one has not done what one ought to have done. (This point will be further developed

in the following chapter in connection with the criteria for "sincerely believing that one ought to do x".)

Retrospective attribution of blame for moral lapses committed, however, is not the only function of "rational" conscience. Thomas distinguishes between its retrospective and prospective functions, as follows:-

> "Our consciences ... judge both what we have done in the past and what we propose to do in the future, but for what we have done they also pass judgement upon us ... In its retrospective function conscience is intimately bound up with feelings of guilt and remorse, but this is not necessarily true of its prospective function. In its prospective function conscience discovers and reminds us of truths that are true for every man."[25]

Retrospectively, "rational" conscience pronounces verdicts and attributes blame; but prospectively it informs and instructs rather than rebukes, for one cannot be judged or blamed for what one has not yet done (unless, as Thomas notes, we are rebuked for the intention of violating the moral law.)[26] My conscience is thus not limited to rebuking me for having taken the extra drink; it can also tell me not to take the extra drink that is now or shortly being offered. The distinction is perhaps less clear-cut than Thomas envisages, however, for a retrospective verdict will often refer to an incident which at the time involved a prospective judgment and instruction which were ignored. If conscience were not at the time overruled prospectively, there would be less reason for the attribution of blame and the feeling of guilt to result from a retrospective verdict.

The distinction is nevertheless a useful one, and yields two further important implications which arise from the prospective function of conscience. Firstly, the justificatory backing of reasons and principles is even clearer here than in

the case of retrospective verdicts, as feelings of guilt and shame with their "irrational" overtones are not involved (given Thomas's proviso). Thomas even implies that prospective conscience-judgments are thereby more "cognitive" and "universalisable" than retrospective verdicts,[27] but there is no reason to suppose that prospective judgments and retrospective verdicts differ in their logical characteristics, apart from the latter's association with blame and guilt. In both cases previously accepted justificatory principles are applied to a particular situation and an individualised judgment is made.

Secondly, the prospective function of conscience is of particular significance for akrasia, which involves present and future actions rather than past ones. Retrospective verdicts are important in connection with the criteria for "sincere belief", as noted above, but the main problems of akrasia are set in the present ("I now believe that I ought to do x") and in the future ("but am I going to do x?") The ease with which akrasia and its conflicts can be portrayed in terms of prospective conscience-judgments ("my conscience tells me to do x, but ...") illustrates the close conceptual links that exist between conscience and akrasia, and indicates that an analysis of conscience cannot avoid throwing some light on the problems of akrasia.

We may safely conclude, therefore, that "rational" conscience shares with "ought"-judgments the implied backing of justificatory reasons. These reasons derive from the previously accepted principles upon which retrospective verdicts and

prospective judgments are based. In both cases the role of conscience is to relate the justificatory reasons and generalised principles to a specific situation and to one's personal obligations and duties within that situation. (Whether these reasons and principles are in any sense "ultimately" justifiable because of their association with conscience, or whether one should view one's conscience as being possibly erroneous, are further questions of considerable complexity.[28] However, the problem of erroneous conscience is not strictly relevant to akrasia, as will be demonstrated in the following chapter when criteria for akrasia are examined.)

(ii) "Conscience", motivation and countervailing factors

Does "rational" conscience also reflect the distinction between justificatory and motivational factors, implied by "moral" (and "practical")"oughts"? It seems clear that it must, for conscience can only operate when there is tension between obligation and inclination. Without the existence of countervailing factors and tendencies, there is no job for conscience to do, prospectively or retrospectively. As Ryle puts it:-

> "Conscience has nothing to say when the really honest man is asked a question and when he has no temptation to deceive ... Conscience is awake only when there is .... a conflict. Pangs or qualms of conscience can occur only when one of these dispositions is an operative moral principle. (And this "can ... only" is logical and not causal.)"[29]

If my conscience tells me that I was wrong, or that I would be wrong, to do x, this presupposes that there were, or are, countervailing factors present disposing me to do other

than x. "Conscience is best understood," argues Martin, "as the centre of conflict between two things: moral rules ... and any of our tendencies to go against these rules."[30] This conflict means that conscience must share another of the logical features of "ought" - implied uncertainty of outcome.

(iii) "Conscience" and uncertainty of outcome.

The outcome of conscience's prospective judgments and instructions are of necessity uncertain because of the countervailing, motivational factors just mentioned. If these factors are strong enough to provoke an intervention by conscience, they may also be strong enough to overrule conscience's dictates. The very fact that conscience operates prospectively through the medium of instructions, warnings and commands shows that it is fighting an uphill battle of uncertain outcome, for instructions, warnings and commands are only needed in cases where possible or probable counter-tendencies have to be opposed.

As for retrospective verdicts, these presuppose not merely uncertainty of outcome but an indubitable failure to live up to the standards which conscience requires (though in some cases no explicit prospective judgment may have been made at the time). Retrospective verdicts, then, closely resemble "ought-to-have" sentences, which have already been shown in Section 1, B, to imply not merely uncertainty of outcome, but (normally) certainty of non-fulfilment. My conscience blames me retrospectively for not having done what I ought to have done (or for having done what I ought not to have done). If I

had done what I ought to have done, no blame or guilt can result and conscience has no work to do.

(iv) "Conscience", prescriptivity and authority

In Section 1 a number of senses were reviewed in which "oughts" might or might not be said to be "prescriptive". Hare's interpretation of prescriptivity in terms of "assent to first-person imperatives" was rejected, but it was allowed that "moral oughts" refer to obligations, which are not purely descriptive but which impinge authoritatively upon the agent who recognises them as such, and require him to act appropriately.

The metaphors which we use to depict the activities of conscience suggest that it too is "prescriptive" in this sense. Fotion remarks how we picture our consciences as demanding, telling, driving, nagging, commanding and coercing: "Conscience may or may not be authoritative, but it is (psychologically) authoritarian."[31] In so far as "rational" conscience tells us what it was, or is, right or wrong for us to do, it is clearly prescriptive in both its retrospective and prospective roles, though it can only be "action-guiding", of course, prospectively, when the action has not yet taken place. Even "irrational" conscience qualifies as being prescriptive in Fotion's "authoritarian" sense, for it nags and coerces its victim by inflicting feelings of guilt and anxiety upon him for reasons of which he is not consciously aware. Conscience is thus "authoritarian" in both its "rational" and "irrational" forms, but it is the sense in which "rational" conscience is also "authoritative" that is of most relevance to a discussion of

its prescriptivity.

The authority of conscience is a central feature of Butler's famous account:

> "... you cannot form a notion of this faculty, conscience, without taking in judgment, direction, superintendency. This is a constituent part of the idea, that is, of the faculty itself: and, to preside and govern, from the very economy and constitution of man, belongs to it. Had it strength, as it has right; had it power as it has manifest authority; it would absolutely govern the world."[32]

Butler here raises crucial questions about the nature of conscience's authority and consequently of its prescriptivity. As Baier asks, "Is it authoritative the way an authority on marsupials is or the way a ticket inspector is?"[33] Three possible aspects of conscience's authority can be distinguished, as follows.

1. Conscience acts as an obvious authority in Fotion's "authoritarian" sense, described above: i.e. it functions both retrospectively and prospectively by commanding, telling, directing, superintending, etc.
2. Its implied backing of justificatory reasons and principles also makes "rational" conscience an authority on moral matters affecting the owner of the conscience. We recognise its pronouncements and instructions as authoritative and thereby valid, because we have previously accepted the standards on which they are based. The guilt and remorse which result from disobeying our conscience is itself evidence of the esteem in which we hold it as a moral authority, (though whether or not we should hold it to be an absolute and unquestionable authority will depend upon our views concerning its possible erroneousness).

3. Despite its authoritarianism (1) and its moral authoritativeness (2), "rational" conscience does not always exercise actual, overriding authority, as Butler recognises in his peroration - "Had it strength, as it has right; had it power, as it has manifest authority; it would absolutely govern the world." Strength and power do not necessarily accompany authoritarian or authoritative directions. I may "hear" conscience's prospective instructions, recognise them as morally authoritative, yet still (when the chips are down) disobey those directions and thereby incur blame and guilt. Whether or not, conscience can be erroneous, it can certainly be ineffectual, to use Kolnai's term: "It is bad, but quite possible, that my sense of a moral obligation should be outweighed by non-moral concerns (and awareness of this possibility lies at the root of Conscience)."[34]

In practice, then, the moral authority of conscience's prospective directions may be overriden and made ineffectual in the same way that "moral oughts" may be. These directions may often be psychologically dominant, but they cannot always be, for if we always did what our consciences told us, conscience would be deprived of half of its function - the pronouncing of retrospective verdicts and the assignment of blame. Non-moral considerations may at times prove motivationally more potent than moral ones, despite conscience's prescriptive authoritarianism and authoritativeness.

This section has examined how the phenomenon of conscience in both its prospective and retrospective roles reflects

and further illuminates the logical features of "ought" discussed in Section 1. In conclusion it will now be argued that our experience of conscience, together with the conceptual network we use to describe it, constitutes a further defence against claims, such as Socrates' and Hare's, that akrasia is logically and empirically impossible.

B. "Conscience" and akrasia

The concept of conscience is explanatory as well as descriptive. It describes certain aspects of our experience as moral judges and moral agents, and it also attempts to explain this experience by invoking the notion of a moral faculty acting as a judge and guardian, whose function is both to pronounce verdicts on past misdemeanours, thus inflicting feelings of guilt and remorse, and to warn against proposed or contemplated misdemeanours which would violate our previously accepted standards and principles.

The metaphorical nature of this explanation (with its images of judges pronouncing and guardians dictating) may create some conceptual obscurity, but this cannot be used as evidence against the existence of the phenomena which give rise to the attempted explanation. We do feel guilt, shame and remorse when we realise that we have acted against our moral principles, and we do feel apprehension and unease when we contemplate performing such an action. The conceptual network within which "conscience" is located describes experiences of which all moral agents are aware, <u>because</u> they are moral agents:- feelings of guilt and remorse, temptations resisted or succumbed to, recognition of

obligations and duties which may appear distasteful, failure to live up to one's own standards, responsibility for having acted badly, and so on.

The arguments for the logical possibility of akrasia, therefore, do not depend solely upon linguistic features of "ought" (or of "conscience"), for these features can only be identified in so far as they serve to reflect and classify our experience of the difficulties which actually confront us in our moral judgments and actions. The logical geography of "conscience" and its related concepts is as it is because the moral life is as it is - often difficult to live. An inquiry into "conscience" is indeed, to use Hare's phrase yet again, "at one and the same time about language and about what happens." What happens in the case of conscience's activities seems conclusive evidence for the possible (indeed likely) occurrence of akrasia.

In view of this evidence it is significant that both Socrates and Hare virtually ignore "conscience" and its activities, partly perhaps because of the difficulties which it creates for their theses. More fundamental reasons for the omission can also be deduced from their respective positions, and these throw further light upon the connections between conscience and akrasia.

(i) Socrates' emphasis upon self-knowledge suggests one such reason. If moral decisions are merely a matter of "weighing pleasures against pleasures, pains against pains, and pleasures against pains" in order to calculate what will yield the greatest ultimate satisfaction for oneself, then presumably one is unlikely to decide upon a course of action

knowing that it will inflict feelings of guilt and remorse (i.e. "pain") upon oneself. Acting against one's conscience, then, is to choose a "painful" option, which, according to Socrates, no man ever does except through ignorance and miscalculation. The phenomena of conscience, temptation, guilt and remorse, however, cannot convincingly be described or explained in terms of intellectual miscalculation and inadequate self-knowledge, as was noted in Chapter II. In yielding to temptation and going against our conscience, we feel guilty of violating the authority of moral requirements; our feelings of guilt cannot be attributed to a failure in calculating our future satisfaction, because we could not at the time be aware that we were guilty of miscalculation. The Socratic account of self-knowledge cannot accommodate the phenomena of conscience.

The Socratic (or Platonic) account of ideal knowledge is similarly irreconcilable with conscience. According to the Theory of Ideas, as outlined in Chapter II, a man only really "knows" what is good after he has reached the ultimate stage of apprehending the Idea of the Good itself, which is set at the apex of the hierarchy of Ideas giving "reality and being" to all the others. Gaining moral knowledge is thus a mystical, even religious, process, involving long and arduous preparatory discipline and culminating in an ineffable and unforgettable revelation. Religious or quasi-religious revelations of this kind produce conversion and commitment, faith and certainty - not

doubt and temptation. The question did not arise for Paul, following his experience on the road to Damascus,[35] as to whether he ought now to believe in God and become a Christian, despite his previous belief that it was his religious duty to persecute Christianity. Similarly it would be unthinkable for Plato's philosopher-king, once having undergone the revelatory experience of "knowing the Good", to be afflicted by crises of conscience concerning what it was right for him to do; real knowledge is not a slave, to be "pushed around" like this. However, as was noted earlier, this account of moral knowledge is highly stipulative and dependent upon a questionable, metaphysical theory; furthermore it can claim only that it is psychologically, and not logically, impossible for a man who "knows the good" to be tempted to act otherwise.

Both the "self-knowledge" strand and the"ideal knowledge" strand of Socrates' thought suggest reasons for the lack of attention paid to conscience in his account of moral judgment and action; yet neither strand succeeds in presenting a convincing and comprehensive account, and conscience thus remains a phenomenon to be taken note of, not ignored as if it were non-existent.

(ii) Hare likewise devotes remarkably little attention to conscience, although he does (grudgingly) allow that guilt feelings may indicate that a person has not done what he thinks he ought (L.M. 11.2) and may serve to preserve the appearance of prescriptive universality in cases of "backsliding" (F.R. 5.6). At first sight this lack of attention

appears odd in view of his "imperativist" view of moral language, for "assenting to first-person commands" suggests a process not unlike obeying the dictates of conscience. Why then does Hare's account of prescriptivity make so little reference to the role of conscience in moral judgment and decision-making? The key to this puzzle is provided by some of Hare's terminological oddities examined earlier, which in turn throw further light upon his whole moral theory.

Hare's notion of "assenting to first-person commands "suggests a form of moral individualism which is at variance with the view of conscience as a quasi-external authority issuing second-person commands. It was argued in Chapter II that a "first-person command" is strictly speaking self-contradictory; if what Hare calls "the curious metaphor of the divided self" is adopted, the imperatives remain, logically and grammatically, second-person (i.e. the "higher self" issuing commands to the "lower self"). By employing the (incoherent) notion of a "first-person command", translated as "Let me do x", or "Let me try doing x", Hare produces a picture of moral judgment and decision very different from that suggested by the model of "conscience" as the source of second-person commands issued to a possibly recalcitrant "lower self".

Hare's picture is of an individual forming his own moral judgments, to which he automatically "assents" because he has made them. If he has himself decided upon them, why should he not also act upon them? The individual "looks for" suitable moral judgments and "finds" suitable moral

actions to perform. The "conscience" model, on the other hand, portrays the individual as one confronted by the impersonal, moral authority of rules and principles, which may become accepted and "internalised", but which remain reliant for their basis of justification upon a source "external" to the individual. "Assent" does not necessarily follow from this confrontation, because the "external" basis of conscience's authority creates the possibility, even the likelihood, of conflict and temptation.

The individualistic nature of Hare's moral theory, therefore, is revealed in his use of such terminology as "assenting to first-person commands". One consequence of this theory is that conscience and its related concepts are largely ignored. Like Socrates, Hare is forced to disregard "what happens" in the moral life (e.g. the activities of conscience) because of distortions caused by a stipulative theoretical interpretation of that life. The close logical connection between conscience and akrasia compels both Socrates and Hare to turn a blind eye to the former in order to maintain the logical impossibility of the latter.

Conclusion

This section has examined certain logical features of "oughts" and also certain aspects of "conscience". Taken together, these two elements seem sufficient to demonstrate the logical and empirical possibility of akrasia, despite the arguments of Socrates and Hare. To claim that akrasia can and does occur, however, is not of course to show why or how it occurs,

though certain embryonic lines of approach to the question of explanation have already been indicated in places. These will be further developed in Chapters IV and V.

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CHAPTER IV - INTERPRETATIONS AND EXPLANATIONS OF AKRASIA

The previous chapter attempted to establish the logical and empirical possibility of a man thinking that he ought (in a "full-blooded" sense) to do x, but not in fact doing x, though able to do so. The next questions to look at are those of interpretation and explanation: what exactly is happening in such cases, and how or why does it happen?

Before considering these questions, however, some further clarification is needed of the central concepts under discussion. Reference has already frequently been made to the notions of akrasia, weakness of will, moral weakness, and not doing what one thinks one ought to do. Clearly the relationships and distinctions between these notions need to be explored, and possible criteria suggested in order to delineate more precisely the phenomenon that is under investigation.

1. Clarification of the Concept of Akrasia

A. Its Explanatory Function

One major problem in attempting to define akrasia is to avoid confusing the definition with a suggested explanation. Both Aristotle and Hare are guilty in this respect, each apparently seduced by the word's etymological roots. Aristotle defines the "akrates" as one who "knowing that what he does is bad, does it as a result of passion",[1] while Hare states that akrasia is an "inability to realise our ideals ... literally 'not being strong enough' (sc. to control oneself)."[2]

Both of these accounts offer an explanation of akrasia as part of its meaning. Hare suggests that akrasia involves an inability to act in a certain way because of a lack of strength and self-control. He goes on to identify akrasia directly with both "moral weakness" and "weakness of will",[3] and as we have seen concludes that "the typical case of moral weakness ... is a case of 'ought but can't'",[4] thereby introducing the notion of "psychological impossibility".

This argument does little to clarify the concept of akrasia as it

(i) confuses definition with explanation,

(ii) fails to consider whether any distinctions should be drawn between akrasia, moral weakness, and weakness of will,

and (iii) presents "ought but can't" as the typical case of moral weakness, although (as was argued in Chapter II, Section 3) it seems highly doubtful whether a case of "ought but can't", or psychological impossibility, is a case of moral weakness at all, let alone a typical one.

Aristotle, whose account will be examined later in more detail as a possible explanation of akrasia, offers an even more specific explanation in the course of his definition. The "akrates", or incontinent man, is said to act "as a result of passion";[5] incontinent people "must be said to be in a similar condition to men asleep, mad or drunk";[6] the incontinent man pursues "bodily pleasures", though thinking that he ought not to do so;[7] the incontinent man fails to overcome the temptations of

pleasure.[8] Akrasia for Aristotle, then, by definition involves the influence of passions, pleasures and temptations, and in its central use refers to bodily pleasures connected with food and sex - other uses are "called incontinence by a metaphor."[9]

For the sake of clarity, however, it is important to reach a definition of akrasia that is, as far as possible, independent of any assumed explanation, though it is easy to see why Aristotle, Hare and others have failed to do this. Akrasia, weakness of will and moral weakness are themselves to a large degree explanatory rather than descriptive concepts. Each implies that the phenomena to which it refers are to be explained in terms of some kind of weakness, a lack of strength, power or control. "Weakness of will" contains, self-evidently, the explanatory notion of "will", the strength or weakness of which, it is implied, will influence action; "akrasia" literally suggests a lack or absence (the prefix a-) of power or command over oneself; while "moral weakness" similarly suggests a lack of moral strength or control. Each of these concepts then offers an implicit explanation of a negative kind: something is thought to be lacking, absent or not strong enough.

The influence of these implicit explanations upon discussion of examples which they are allegedly merely describing has been considerable. It is clearly difficult to examine examples of something labelled "weakness of will" with an open mind, unaffected by preconceived assumptions that explanations of the examples are to be sought <u>in terms of</u> the relative strengths and weaknesses of "the will". Such explanations may turn out to be adequate (they will in fact be considered later in this

chapter), but it is inadmissible to write them in initially to the definition and description of the phenomena requiring explanation. What must be done is to define the phenomena which seem to fall within the orbit of akrasia, weakness of will and moral weakness, drawing distinctions between these concepts if necessary, and then to consider possible explanations of the phenomena.

Firstly, what exactly are we trying to define? Do these concepts refer to a disposition, habit or character trait, or to an event or occurrence? However we define the concepts, they would seem to fall necessarily into the latter category and only contingently into the former, for there is no reason why a man should not be "incontinent", weak-willed or morally weak on one unique occasion alone. Psychologically it may be more likely that people develop the tendency to behave frequently in this sort of way, rather than once only or very seldom, but there is no logical necessity about this. Indeed, the most vivid (and perhaps interesting) examples of akrasia, weakness of will or moral weakness may well be those that are unique or "out of character", (for example, the faithful husband who yields just once to the charms of another woman).

Our task, therefore, is to describe a type of event or occurrence, which may or may not be repeated, in such a way as to avoid prejudging the question of explanation. What type of event is involved, and do akrasia, weakness of will and moral weakness all refer to the same type of event?

Matthews' list of examples, which she uses to delimit the concepts of moral weakness and weakness of will (already

referred to in Chapter II, Section 3) provides a useful starting-point.[10] She suggests and illustrates the following categories - putting off the evil moment, backsliding, irresolution, being persuaded against one's better judgement, being too easily discouraged, being unable to bring oneself to do something, being overcome with desire or being unable to resist the temptation, and failure to control one's anger - and claims that all except the last would usually be regarded as cases of weakness of will, and that all except the last and perhaps the first could be regarded as cases of moral weakness.[11]

Unfortunately, however, she does not attempt to draw any distinctions between the two concepts, apart from the unexplained suggestion that putting off the evil moment might qualify as a case of weakness of will but not of moral weakness. She stresses that both terms imply moral censure and that their main function is moral appraisal - "they are used to give blame-type judgements about a situation rather than either descriptions or explanations of a phenomenon or range of phenomena."[12] If this were in fact the case, then our search for a descriptive definition would be doomed to failure, but Matthews immediately qualifies this statement by going on to suggest elaborate descriptive criteria for weakness of will, which will be considered shortly.

Is Matthews' emphasis upon moral censure and moral appraisal justified? Clearly these concepts are often used to convey moral censure, but Matthews goes so far as to suggest that this moral censure is logically prior to their other functions - "we do not use them to describe what happened, and then blame

the man for it". Possibly not, but this is not because the blame is logically prior to the description; it is because the concepts basically are not descriptive concepts, but rather, as has just been argued, explanatory concepts. It is the built-in explanation that gives rise to blame and censure (i.e. that there is a lack or weakness of something which is thought morally valuable.) Moral censure is thus the logical result of an explanation in terms of moral weakness, and the explanatory function of these concepts is logically prior to their normative function.

This analysis explains one puzzling feature of weakness of will, and also the reason for its frequent identification with moral weakness. Many examples of what might be called weakness of will do not, as far as description is concerned, appear to provide grounds for moral censure. My car is dirty and I feel that I ought to wash it, but I keep "putting off the evil moment" of getting the hose pipe out. Now washing my car is not in itself a morally praiseworthy or blameworthy activity; in certain contexts it could be appraised in either way (e.g. if I were doing it on the one hand for reasons of road safety, or on the other in order to impress the neighbours), but normally it is not an activity that is subjected to moral appraisal. Yet in describing my failure to wash my car in terms of "putting off the evil moment" (or as "irresolution", "being persuaded against one's better judgment", or "being too easily discouraged" - several of Matthews' categories could be applicable here), weakness of will is implied and a moral query consequently raised about my behaviour. The implicit explanation of my behaviour, not the

mere description of it, has invited moral appraisal. In being classified as a case of weakness of will, my initially non-moral behaviour has acquired moral overtones and thus become assimilated to a case of moral weakness.

A more extreme and paradoxical example of this process is where the action that is contemplated but not performed is considered to be not non-moral but immoral. I conceive a hatred for my neighbour who keeps his car much cleaner than I do mine, and determine to throw a bucket of mud over his car one dark night. As in the previous example, however, I may put off the evil moment, be irresolute, be persuaded against my judgment, be too easily discouraged, or be unable to bring myself to do the deed (to use Matthews' categories again), with the result that my neighbour's car remains unsullied. The contemplated action in this case is one that would normally be considered blameworthy, but am I also to be held doubly blameworthy on grounds of weakness of will and moral weakness for <u>not</u> having performed a blameworthy action?

This paradox arises from the process described in the first example. The description of the event (or non-event) in terms of putting off the evil moment, irresolution etc. invites explanatory classification as a case of weakness of will, which in turn suggests blameworthiness in terms of moral weakness; the explanatory force of "weakness of will" provides prima facie grounds for moral censure and a charge of moral weakness. This is presumably why we tend, to some extent, to admire such characteristics as resolution, persistence, determination and strength of purpose, even when exhibited by dictators and criminals. Such

people do what they resolve to do and thereby avoid moral censure on the grounds of moral weakness, though they may well incur censure on other grounds.

The relationship between the concepts of akrasia, weakness of will and moral weakness, therefore, looks to be a very close one. All three have more of an explanatory than a descriptive function, but the moral appraisal occasioned by the explanation is implicit in akrasia and weakness of will, while explicit in moral weakness. Strictly speaking, then, it might be possible to say that my failure to throw mud over my neighbour's car was a case of weakness of will (or akrasia), but not of moral weakness. The implicit moral censure in weakness of will, however, is so strong that it is doubtful whether this distinction could be upheld. My failure could still be said to reflect a "character-flaw" (i.e. a lack of resolution), which might well be described as a form of moral weakness.

For the purpose of this study, therefore, the three concepts will be held to be synonomous, though the important distinction between moral, non-moral and immoral contexts of behaviour will be examined later. For convenience' sake the term "akrasia", rather than weakness of will or moral weakness, will generally be used from now on, but this is not to be interpreted in the narrow Aristotelian sense. Exactly how it is to be interpreted is the next question to consider. (The person who is guilty of akrasia will henceforth be labelled "akrasiac", but this does not imply necessarily that he has any <u>disposition</u> or <u>tendency</u> to act in this way; as was noted above, one might

be akrasiac only once in a lifetime.)

B. Descriptive Criteria

The explanatory function of akrasia and its related concepts has been shown to be logically prior to the normative (or "moral censure") function. Prior to explanation, however, there must be something to be explained, something which presumably can be described. Akrasia seems to cover a wide range of behaviour; the concept is polymorphous in that it cannot be identified with any one specific action, activity or type of behaviour. What then are the possible criteria by which we might characterise an incident as an instance of akrasia?

(i) Inconsistency criterion

At the centre of the concept lies the notion of inconsistency. If there is no inconsistency between what I do and what I think I ought to do, then the question of akrasia does not arise. I cannot be considered guilty of akrasia if:-

(a) I do what I think I ought to do, (e.g. give up smoking when I think that I ought to give up smoking).

(b) I do not think that I ought not to do what I do, (e.g. tell a lie when I do not think that I ought not to tell a lie).

This frees from charges of akrasia both the morally resolute and the immorally resolute. The dedicated master-criminal who deliberates, forms intentions and implements them is not open to charges of akrasia because there is no inconsistency between his decisions and his actions.

But what sort of inconsistency is involved in cases of akrasia? Presumably the inconsistency is in some way between a person's "ought"-judgments on the one hand, and his actions on the other. This inconsistency must also be contemporaneous; for example, a change of mind could occur between the initial "ought"-judgment and the eventual action, but this would not provide an instance of akrasia if at the time of acting (or failing to act) there was no inconsistency. Akrasia then seems to refer to a particular state of mind in which a person acts or fails to act; while doing x, or deciding to do x, one must sincerely believe, think or feel that one ought not to be doing x or deciding to do x. ("Ought" here is to be taken "full-bloodedly" and not in Hare's sense of a statement of psychological or sociological fact.)

"Acting" is not necessarily to be interpreted as overt behaviour, for akrasia may also refer to failures which occur in the making of judgments and decisions. I may believe that I ought to give careful thought to a particular problem before deciding what action to take or what attitude to adopt, yet through laziness, indifference or inattention fail to put the mental effort which I believe I ought to put into a consideration of the question. The action which I finally take will not be at variance with my "ought"-judgment, for I have not bothered to work out such a judgment, though I believe that I ought to have done, but I could still be held guilty of akrasia in having failed to "do" (at the intellectual level) what I believed I ought to do. A similar, but strictly "non-moral" form of intellectual akrasia can also occur, whereby the agent, working within an academic discipline,

is slipshod in his thinking and reasoning and accordingly produces unsound results. Such a person's "action" (e.g. publishing his results, giving a lecture, etc.) may not itself be at variance with any "ought"-judgment of his, but akrasia may well have occurred at the earlier "intellectual" stage, when he omitted to make his thinking and reasoning as rigorous as he believed he ought. Intellectual failure then, of both the moral and non-moral variety must be included within an overall account of akrasia, and "acting" will henceforth be taken to encompass also the intellectual activities involved in, for example, considering factors, weighing up evidence, working out answers, reasoning to conclusions, interpreting and applying principles, and forming decisions.

The possibility of intellectual akrasia of this kind invites a general objection to the criterion of contemporaneous inconsistency. Does the akrasiac need to be consciously aware of what he believes he ought to do at the time when he fails to do it, or does he more typically fail to reach an explicit "ought"-judgment by deliberately ignoring factors which (he knows) would otherwise present themselves as relevant to his decision about what he ought to do? If the latter is more commonly the case, is not the contemporaneity requirement too strong, as the akrasiac at the time of acting is not consciously aware of an obligation to act otherwise for he has contrived to be ignorant of that obligation?

This objection can be countered, however, by noting that in such cases (which need not be thought of as particularly "typical") there must still have been, prior to the action itself,

a conscious awareness of the inconsistency between what the agent believed he ought to do (i.e. consider all the relevant factors) and what he actually did (i.e. allowed the relevant factors to be obscured and ignored). In such cases akrasia can properly be said to occur not at the time of the action itself (when there is no contemporaneous inconsistency), but at the time when the agent failed to perform the intellectual activities which he believed and was consciously aware that he ought to perform. The possibility of intellectual akrasia thus preserves rather than destroys the criterion of contemporaneous inconsistency.

This criterion also raises the further question of retrospective assessments of akrasia. Matthews[13] seems to think that her categories of irresolution, being persuaded against one's better judgment and being too easily discouraged can provide instances of akrasia by retrospective analysis:-

a) Irresolution consists in deciding or resolving to do something and then "looking at the situation again from a different angle, considering counter-reasons and aims and principles which militate against the original decision or resolve." This, according to Matthews, could count as weakness of will "if one then thinks that one was right in the first place ... even if one has not done anything contrary to the decision or resolution, nor even delayed doing something in accordance with it."

b) In being persuaded against one's better judgment, one is led "to consider the whole situation differently, and in consequence to do something which one later considers wrong ..." A charge of weakness is then possible, Matthews argues, "for

being influenced by insufficient reasons, which only seemed sufficient at the time."

c) In being too easily discouraged, one is put off one's resolve "by thoughts of how hard it is and how unlikely one is to succeed", but comes later to realise "that one might well have succeeded if only one had not been so defeatist." Again Matthews thinks that this allows a charge of "lack of will-power".

These three examples challenge the suggestion that akrasia necessarily involves what has been labelled contemporaneous inconsistency; retrospective blame or guilt is claimed to be an adequate substitute. But is Matthews justified in extending the concept thus far?

In a), if one's action results from "looking at the situation again from a different angle, considering counter-reasons and aims and principles", how can this apparently intelligent re-appraisal count as an example of akrasia? The fact that one Later thinks that one may have been wrong is irrelevant. A later judgment is not necessarily a superior one, and even if it were, the appropriate charge would not be one of akrasia but of misjudgment, shortsightedness or inattention to relevant considerations.

Similarly in b), "being influenced by insufficient reasons, which only seemed sufficient at the time" cannot constitute a case of akrasia if the reasons did in fact seem sufficient at the time. If at the time of acting one considers that there are sufficient reasons for that action, one may later

in the light of subsequent events be blamed, or blame oneself, for having been wrong or made a mistake, but as in a) the appropriate charge is not one of akrasia.

In c) a parallel argument applies; if one comes to believe that one's task is so hard that one is very unlikely to succeed, it is not weak-willed but realistic to accept that assessment and act on it. Later one may decide, rightly or wrongly, that the assessment was unsound, but this again implies a defect in judgment (possibly deserving moral censure); a charge of akrasia is again inappropriate.

In each of these cases the grounds for censure would derive from the unsoundness of the judgment upon which the person acted, or failed to act. This type of censure is not that with which we normally associate the notions of moral weakness or weakness of will. The person in each of the three cases could be said to have "acted in good faith" - i.e. at the time of acting, or failing to act, he thought that he was doing the right thing - whereas the distinctive feature of akrasia is that the agent is not "acting in good faith", for he acts, or fails to act, <u>despite</u> his belief that there are good reasons why he should do otherwise.

The distinction between retrospective blame and contemporaneous inconsistency can be further sharpened by referring back to the two functions of conscience, discussed in Chapter III:-

1) In pronouncing retrospective verdicts, conscience assigns blame for a past misdemeanour which

   a) it may have warned against at the time,

   or b) it may not have warned against at the time.

2) In instructing what ought to be done, conscience presents the

case for duty and obligation in opposition to possible counter-inclinations.

Instances of 1a) constitute clear cases of akrasia, as do instances of 2) if the counter-inclinations happen to win the day. But instances of 1b) come into a different category, for the moral disapproval here is directed solely against the act that was committed or omitted, and not against any weakness of will or failure to act on one's principles - at the time there was no such weakness or failure. If my conscience now tells me that I was wrong to put the housekeeping money on a horse last week, though at the time it was silent because the venture seemed a justifiable one in the circumstances (e.g. the tip was from a reliable source, and the housekeeping money was insufficient to pay the bills as it stood), it is the recklessness of my action, now seen with the benefit of hindsight, that is under censure, not my weakness of will in failing to do what I believed I ought to do. Yet I may feel just as much remorse for my recklessness as I would have done in different circumstances for my weakness.

Feelings of remorse and guilt, then, do not necessarily signify that akrasia has occurred. They are, however, important in the analysis of akrasia, in connection with the genuineness of the inconsistency and the sincerity of the "ought"-judgment. The arguments in favour of the logical impossibility of akrasia that have already been examined demand a connection between "ought" and "shall" so tight that it becomes an analytic truth that one always does what one sincerely believes one ought to do (unless prevented). Acting on one's beliefs is undeniably the surest test of the sincerity of those beliefs, but if the logical

impossibility of akrasia is challenged and the connection between "ought" and "shall" loosened, other criteria for sincerity and thus for genuine inconsistency are needed. Such criteria tend to centre around the notions of remorse and guilt.

Some examples of these alternative criteria were mentioned in Chapter III, Section 3. Hare admits (somewhat surprisingly in view of his overall thesis) that if a person does not do something, but the omission is accompanied by feelings of guilt etc., we normally say that he has not done what he thinks he ought; Gardiner speaks of "a host of considerations, behavioural and non-behavioural" which are relevant in determining the sincerity of a person's moral beliefs, including feelings of guilt, shame, remorse and unease; while Horsburgh also suggests as criteria, remorse, guilt and repentance, claiming that intense remorse can sometimes be better evidence for sincere belief than mere conformity.

Feelings of remorse and guilt, therefore, seem obvious candidates as possible alternative criteria for sincere belief and genuine inconsistency. Such feelings reflect the moral authority and justificatory backing of moral "oughts", which the akrasiac recognises as valid and which thus cause him unease when he realises that he is violating them. His unease is a mark of the esteem in which he sincerely holds them.

There are dangers, though, in placing undue weight upon criteria such as remorse. This is because the action-requirement is still ultimately not avoided. "The person who genuinely feels remorse", as Thalberg argues, " ... is a person who is disposed to act differently in the future."[14] Displays of remorse repeated

indefinitely with no corresponding attempt to mend one's ways will soon fail to carry conviction. To rely wholly upon remorse, then, as an alternative criterion to action in an attempt to defend the logical possibility of akrasia is self-defeating, because remorse itself requires eventual action if it is to be counted as genuine. This does not mean, however, that remorse cannot be used as a possible criterion of sincere belief on a particular occasion when that belief was not acted upon, provided that there is some reason to believe that the person is "disposed to act differently in future".

If feelings of remorse do not provide a sufficient, alternative criterion for sincere belief, we must look to Gardiner's suggestion of an (unspecified) "host of considerations, behavioural and non-behavioural". Sincere belief can be indicated by a wide variety of responses: lies about what one has done, attempted elaborate rationalisations, over-compensation for what appears a trivial error, unsolicited confessions, pleas for forgiveness and for "another chance", self-abasement or even self-sacrifice, embarrassment, hesitation, undue reticence or extreme bravado. Any of these might or might not be accompanied by pangs of remorse.

We cannot, then, point to any one necessary or sufficient condition for the sincerity of a person's belief that he ought to do x, on occasions when he does not do x. Different considerations will apply in different cases, and where the considerations are "non-behavioural", it may well be impossible for an observer to determine at the time the sincerity or insincerity of another person's moral beliefs. The complexity and range of these

conditions, however, is no reason for ruling out everything except the action criterion, thus saddling ourselves with the doctrine that all men necessarily do what they believe they ought to do.

Akrasia therefore involves contemporaneous inconsistency between judgment and action, between a sincere belief that one ought to do x and a failure in practice to do x. The exact nature of this inconsistency will be discussed more fully when possible explanations of akrasia are considered later in this chapter and in Chapter V.

(ii) Decision Criterion

Can the inconsistency criterion be given more specific content by suggesting a further necessary condition involving the making of a decision or resolve? The examples of akrasia so far discussed might lead one to suppose that the paradigm case is where a person decides that he ought to do x (or that he ought not to do x), but nevertheless decides not to do x (or to do x). Are these two decisions then (or perhaps only one of them) a logically necessary element in cases of akrasia?

Provided that no change of mind or revised judgment has occurred between the two decisions, they would certainly seem to provide a sufficient condition for akrasia. Two such decisions would constitute one species of inconsistency, as described in (i), for without an intervening change of mind the two decisions must produce a judgment and an action that are at variance with each other.

However, although this double-decision condition is

sufficient, it does not appear to be necessary. The first "judgmental" decision _that_ ... is not necessary in all cases of akrasia, for in deciding _to_ act against one's principles, or against one's moral beliefs and sentiments, or against one's moral instincts, no initial, conscious, explicit decision _that_ ... is required. I may find myself acting against my principles etc. in telling the policeman a lie, without having previously decided explicitly _that_ I ought to tell him the truth. We do not go through life continually making considered decisions that we ought (morally or practically) to do things. Very often we are guided more or less unreflectively by our beliefs, attitudes and habits which we have built up over a long period and which free us from the chores of constant decision-making.

The second decision - the decision _to_ ... or _not to_ ... - is equally unnecessary. One need not _decide_ not to do x; one may just not do it, or not force oneself to do it, or omit to do it, or let it slide. Again no conscious, explicit decision is required - unless it is maintained that _any_ action or failure to act necessarily involves a prior "decision", so that one must have in fact "decided" to omit to do it, to let it slide etc. This argument, however, arbitrarily assumes a very tight conceptual link between "action" and "decision", and extends the concept of decision to a point where it ceases to be independently meaningful; it is also open to "infinite regress" objections, because presumably the act of deciding would necessitate a prior act of deciding, and so on.

Furthermore, a conscious, explicit decision to do what one believes one ought not to do is not merely an unnecessary requirement in cases of akrasia; it is probably untypical of

most cases. Such a decision constitutes an open admission of weakness and failure and an open invitation for reproach, blame and guilt, particularly in cases of moral akrasia. But, as will be elaborated in Chapter V, the moral akrasiac is not insensitive to moral considerations, for he sincerely holds moral beliefs which he thinks he ought to act upon. He will not, then, normally want to lay himself open to moral condemnation (from others or from his own conscience) by deliberately formulating a decision to act against what he believes to be morally right.

Neither an initial decision that ... nor a subsequent decision to ... is a necessary element in all cases of akrasia, therefore, and although one or both types of decision may often be involved, the inconsistency that is typical of akrasia cannot always be characterised in this way. Decision may, however, contribute something to the clarification of akrasia in connection with a further possible criterion.

(iii) Ability Criterion and the Challenge of Actualism

Objections have already been put forward in Chapter II, Section 3 against explanations and definitions of akrasia in terms of "psychological impossibility". It follows from these objections that a man must have been physically and psychologically capable of acting otherwise, if his action or failure to act is properly to be described as a case of akrasia. The alcoholic, the kleptomaniac, the drug addict and the manic depressive, in so far as they cannot act otherwise, do not exhibit weakness of will or moral weakness. Only free agents can be judged to be weak-willed or morally weak; they have some strength of will or moral

impetus, but not enough, and are consequently held to be blameworthy. A complete lack of strength would be described as impotence, incapacity or paralysis; weakness implies a limited degree of strength, not a total lack of it.

An ability criterion, however, raises obvious and familiar difficulties concerning the interpretation of "could have done otherwise". When, if ever, can we say that a person could, or could not, have done otherwise, and how can we ever verify such a statement? What degree of determinism are we prepared to allow in our explanations of human behaviour?

It is not intended to devote a major section of this study to the problems of determinism. To examine fully the relationship of these problems to moral judgment and action and to moral education would require a separate thesis in its own right, and would upset the balance and emphases of this one. Accordingly, certain premises will be adopted but not fully argued in places. The account of action, for example, to be presented in the following chapter will assume that it is legitimate to speak of an agent being faced with a choice between alternative courses of action open to him; similarly, the distinction between ability and inability to act otherwise will be assumed to be a valid and necessary one, which will feature prominently in the examination of suggested explanations of akrasia in the following section.

Because, however, "ability to have acted otherwise" is here being proposed as a necessary condition of akrasia, it is essentialat this point to consider, at least briefly, determinist claims that no one could in fact ever have acted otherwise - that only the actual was and is possible, and that it is therefore

wrong to suppose that I could have done x when I actually did y. This doctrine of actualism represents one formulation of the determinist principle of universal causation; if all events, including human actions, have "causes", then conditions A, B, C which cause me to do x and not y also prevent me from doing y and not x - i.e. given the determining conditions I could not have acted otherwise.

Any attempt at a complete refutation of actualism would, for the reasons given above, be beyond the scope of this study. For present purposes it will suffice to list a number of counter-arguments which, while by no means constituting a complete refutation, at least cast considerable doubt on the doctrine, and grant us a provisional licence to continue to use such phrases as "alternative courses of action" and "ability to have acted otherwise" without obvious logical incoherence. The counter-arguments will be outlined under three headings:

(a) common sense arguments

(b) distinction arguments

(c) linguistic arguments.

(a) Commonsense Arguments against Actualism

The most obvious counter-arguments are provided by "commonsense". As Moore argued,[15] the claim that no one could ever have acted other than as he did conflicts with our commonsense view that there is a clear distinction to be drawn between what a person can and cannot do, or could and could not have done. To deny that I could have scratched my head a minute ago simply on the grounds that I did not in fact do so does violence to our

established beliefs about action, freedom and possibility.

Further weight is added to this commonsense argument when one considers the practical implications of actualism. Why should we go to the trouble of engaging in lengthy and worrying deliberations, or attend courses on decision-making, or even bother to reflect upon our past and future actions, if we believe that only one "option" is ever open to us? If the actualist counters this by maintaining that actualism is compatible with deliberation in so far as the weighing of alternatives itself constitutes a major factor in determining action (i.e. what we do could not be otherwise because of the deliberation which has preceded the action), he is still forced to apply his doctrine to that prior process of deliberation also. The actualist's argument can thus be pushed further and further back (i.e. we could not have acted otherwise, because we could not have decided otherwise, because we could not have deliberated otherwise, because we could not have weighed the alternatives otherwise, because we could not have viewed the situation otherwise, etc.), but he cannot deny that deliberation must always be as "determined" as action. It is difficult to visualise how a person could consistently hold such a view and continue to live a human life involving inter-personal relationships with other human beings; as Ayers puts it, "No one could consistently believe that, or act as if, there is never more than one course of action open to him. We can refrain from blaming, perhaps, but not from deciding."[16]

Strawson elaborates on the impracticality, indeed the impossibility, of living in accordance with the consequences of

deterministic doctrines. He argues that, although we at times adopt an "objective" attitude towards certain people in certain circumstances and thereby suspend our "ordinary, reactive" attitudes (e.g. when "seeing someone ... as warped or deranged or compulsive in behaviour or peculiarly unfortunate in his formative circumstances"),[17] there must remain "the fact of our natural human commitment to ordinary inter-personal attitudes (which is) part of the general framework of human life."[18] Furthermore, even if one were theoretically convinced of the truth of determinism, there would still be no point in considering whether it would therefore be more rational to adopt a universally "objective" attitude, because "it is useless to ask whether it would not be rational for us to do what it is not in our nature to (be able to) do."[19] ('author's italics) In other words, in so far as we are members of human society, we are unable to detach ourselves from the framework of attitudes which goes to make up that society, by acting consistently as if no one could ever behave other than as he does.

A parallel argument against actualism and determinism could be developed, based on the "facts" of personal identity rather than of human society. The question, "Could I (ever) have acted otherwise?" might be shown to be meaningless because the concept of "I" implies an agent who is not to be wholly identified and equated with the sum of motives, psychological pressures and other "factors" that weigh with him. "I" must be more than and other than my motives, my inclinations, even my choices, if it is meaningful to speak of these as "mine". My view of a situation is that of a conscious agent, not that of an inanimate camera with

its film reacting to the stimulus of the light that is admitted; my view is the view that I see, and this seeing must be separable from the "I" who does it. Motives become reduced to mere stimuli only in cases, as Gallagher describes it, "where the 'I' retires to the vanishing point."[20] "To prove that freedom is unthinkable," he suggests, "the determinist would have to demonstrate the complete emptiness of the word 'I'."[21]

A number of commonsense arguments, including some of the above, share one important feature. They claim that determinist and actualist doctrines are forced to blur or ignore various fundamental distinctions which underlie our judgments and interpretations of our own and other people's behaviour. These arguments may be classified for convenience as:-

(b) Distinction Arguments against Actualism

Strawson has already provided an example of this type of argument by his reference to our customary categorisation of certain people as "warped or deranged or compulsive in behaviour or peculiarly unfortunate in (their) formative circumstances." We do distinguish between "normal" and "abnormal" behaviour (even in animals, let alone human beings) despite the haziness of the borderline at times, and we modify our judgment of the agent and our attitude towards him accordingly; pleas of "abnormality", in Stawson's words, "invite us to view the agent himself in a different light from the light in which we should normally view one who has acted as he has acted."[22] Such pleas sanction the excuse "he couldn't help it", but the point of the distinction argument here would be that that excuse is only used to pick out

a particular and relatively uncommon type of behaviour. Yet if actualism is true, no one could ever have "helped it", and my washing of my hands after using a poisonous insecticide in the garden becomes as unavoidable an action as Lady Macbeth's compulsive efforts to get rid of her non-existent bloodstains. Thus our practice of assigning differing degrees of moral responsibility to agents for their actions (which Piaget has shown to characterise the later stages of intellectual and moral development)[23] is unjustified if the consequences of actualism are accepted.

Distinction arguments are strengthened rather than weakened by uncertainties over where exactly the distinction is to be drawn in some cases. The behaviour of the developing child illustrates this point. We are confident in our judgment that the toddler "can't help" bursting into tears when he falls over, or becoming shy and tongue-tied in the presence of strangers; we are equally confident that older children can rationally deliberate and choose between alternatives - such as whether to choose a fiction or non-fiction book from the library, or whether or not to join the Brownies. But in between the two extremes there seem to be a number of twilight cases where the degree of causal influence is uncertain - e.g. where a child plays truant because of an alleged "school phobia", or develops food fads, or invents imaginary companions to talk to. Such problems of classification, however, do not add weight to actualist theories of universal causal inevitability, because the very existence of the problems presupposes the validity of the distinction between causally inevitable and freely chosen behaviour. Doctrines of

universal causation cannot allow an eclectic approach whereby certain pieces of behaviour are deemed to be avoidable and others unavoidable; yet this is exactly the sort of approach which seems to be required in studying the behaviour of the developing child. A similar distinction argument is developed by Strawson, based upon the psycho-analyst's judgment of a patient's behaviour throughout the period of treatment, improvement and eventual "cure".[24]

One other powerful distinction argument should be noted, which is summarised neatly by Ayers in his attack on Hume's actualistic position:

> "... one objection to actualism is that it leaves unexplained why we should ever want to distinguish between the ability to act and the action itself, or ever want to say that some one has a power at all."[25]

Clearly we do often wish to say that a person has certain powers, abilities and capacities, and also that he at times fails to, or refrains from, exercising them; the laconic "could do better" on a school report provides a classic educational example. But a person cannot simultaneously exercise his powers and refrain from exercising them; the schoolboy cannot at the same time do better and fail to do better. If, then, we need to distinguish between abilities and actions, as it seems we often do, it follows that any ability must either be exercised or not be exercised on any particular occasion, and that therefore, as Ayers puts it, "either the doing or the not doing of the action will necessarily remain a potentiality."[26] In other words, the distinction between ability and action presupposes the meaningfulness of the statement, "he could have done otherwise."

(c) Linguistic Arguments against Actualism

The words "can" and "could" may be used in several different senses, and consequently the meaning of such phrases as "could (not) have done otherwise" is far from self-evident. It can be and has been argued that the plausibility of actualism derives from these possibilities of ambiguity.

Particularly misleading are certain "ordinary language" uses of "cannot" and "could not". George Washington's apocryphal claim that he "could not" tell his father a lie is clearly not intended to be taken as a plea of physical impossibility, for such an interpretation would rob the incident of any moral significance. He "could", of course, have told a lie if he had so wished and chosen; the force of the "could not" is to emphasise dramatically the strength of his conviction that he ought to tell his father the truth.

A similarly inaccurate use of "could not" occurs in cases of apparent compulsion - where, for example, the bank clerk "could not" help opening the safe for the robbers because they were threatening to shoot hostages, or where the captured spy "could not" help revealing his country's secrets under torture. Although we attach no blame to the victims of such situations because of the extreme pressure that was exerted upon them, it is still strictly incorrect for anyone (bar the actualist) to maintain that the agents "could not" have done otherwise. The bank clerk could have sacrificed the hostages and saved the money, and the spy could have let himself be mutilated and witheld the information; each acted as he did because he felt that it was not right, or reasonable, or desirable to continue to resist the

pressure.

Even this exceptional type of case, then, is not properly described in terms of "could not have done otherwise". Furthermore, if the actualist tries to maintain that the above examples <u>are</u> cases of "could not have done otherwise" because the agent could not have felt or believed or chosen otherwise for psychological reasons, a distinction-type argument can again be brought against him for he is then forced to treat these apparently exceptional situations as being on all fours with everyday situations; he can draw no distinction between the degrees of compulsion involved in confessing secrets under torture on the one hand and, say, passing the time of day with the milkman on the other.

These "ordinary language" examples merely suggest that "can" and "could" may be slippery concepts; they do not demarcate the different uses of "can" and "could" which may cause ambiguity. An extended account of the conceptual complexities involved would again be out of place in this study, however, and all that will be attempted is a (by no means exhaustive) listing of certain important and distinct senses of "can" and "could" together with an indication of how confusion between these senses may well add to the apparent plausibility of actualism.

Honore's distinction between particular and general "cans" provides a useful starting-point. With particular "cans", "success or failure, on the assumption that an effort has been or will be made, is the factor which governs the use of the notion,"[27] whereas general "cans" are used "to assert a general competence, ability or skill in the performance of some type of action."[28]

To illustrate this distinction with an example (not used by Honore), we might say of a cricketer fielding in the slips that he could not (particular) hold a difficult catch, without in any way implying that he could not (general) hold a difficult catch. He could not (particular) hold it, because on the occasion we are referring to he dropped it and did not hold it, though he tried to; but this does not entail that he could not (general) hold it, because he often does hold equally difficult catches. The team's captain, on being criticised after the match for placing that particular fielder in the slips, might well reply, "Nonsense! He's the only man in the team who can hold a difficult slip catch (or a catch as difficult as that one)."

It is easy to see how confusion over this basic distinction may lead to the view that nobody "could ever have done otherwise". As far as particular "cans" are concerned, it is necessarily true that I cannot do x if I fail to do x on that particular occasion, but this linguistic feature of particular "cans" cannot be used as proof of the actualist doctrine that we cannot in general ever act other than as we do. When judging whether or not a man can do x, or can do other than x, we are usually concerned with the general sense of "can"; we want to know about his "general competence, ability or skill", and in assessing this we take into account his normal levels of achievement, what he normally succeeds in doing if he tries. On the actualist view, however, all "cans" are in effect particular, which leads to the odd conclusion that it is irrelevant to consider a man's normal level of achievement and skill in determining whether or not he can or could do x, for the only criterion is whether he

actually does or did x. The actualist is thus forced to assert that the fielder could not (in any sense) have held the catch if he in fact dropped it, and that the fielder's proven ability in holding difficult catches is irrelevant to the question of whether or not he could have held a particular catch.

To interpret all "cans" and "coulds" as particular also ignores further important distinctions. The question, "Could Jones have done the murder?" is not the same question as "Did Jones do the murder?" as the actualist must maintain; the former must be answered before the latter can be decided. Furthermore, the ambiguity of the question, "Could Jones have done the murder?" reveals at least four senses in which it may be said that a man could have done x when he did not in fact do x.

Firstly, the "could" may refer to opportunity; i.e. could Jones have done it, or was he really at home watching television at the time, as he claims? Secondly, it may refer to capacity; i.e. could Jones have done it, or is he really too puny to have struck such a blow? Thirdly, it may refer to disposition; i.e. could Jones have done it, or is he really too gentle a man to strike another down in anger? Fourthly, it may refer to motive; i.e. could Jones have done it, or was he really the victim's closest friend with no reason to wish him harm? In any or all of these senses we may decide that Jones could have done the murder, without concluding that he did do it. Yet if actualism is correct, we are not allowed to say that Jones could have done it if he did not do it, nor that he could have not done it if he did it.

Finally, some other important distinctions between

different senses of "can" and "could", apparently confused by the actualist, are highlighted in Ayers' discussion of various kinds of possibility. In particular, "natural possibility" is often confused with "possibility for choice", to use Ayers' terminology, the former referring to the "powers of things" and the latter to the "powers of people", despite the fact that "the 'power to do otherwise' that relates to a man's 'liberty', responsibility, choice and the rest is indeed something different from the power of a motor car to do other speeds than the speed it is doing at present ..."[29] This conflation of different types of power and possibility enables the actualist to produce a mechanistic, causal account of human action, but only at the cost of eliminating the set of concepts to which Ayers refers (e.g. liberty, responsibility, choice, etc.) Furthermore, the actualist has to face problems even with the "powers of things", let alone those of people, for he has to assert that a car which is "capable" of (i.e. designed for) travelling at 100 m.p.h. "could not" have travelled at 45 m.p.h. if it was in fact at that time travelling at 44 m.p.h. Such a claim is equally as odd as the assertion that the slip fielder "could not" have held the catch if he in fact dropped it.

The arguments outlined above under (a), (b) and (c), while not intended as a fully developed refutation of actualism, are sufficient at least to indicate the range and strength of objections which the doctrine has to face, and serve to shift the onus of proof on to the actualist's shoulders. This study will therefore proceed on the assumption that the actualist's case is

unproven (and probably unprovable), and that the above arguments seem to support our commonsense supposition that it is both legitimate and meaningful to speak of a person as "being able to act otherwise".

Similarly it is equally defensible to propose an ability criterion for cases of akrasia, which might be formulated as follows: that for a situation to count as an instance of akrasia, it is necessary that the agent

(i) should have been able to act other than in the way he did,

and (ii) should have been able to decide to act other than in the way he did.

Both (i) and (ii) are needed in order to include psychological as well as physical ability or capacity. I may be "able" to do x, in so far as physical, external conditions are concerned, but unable to decide to do x because of compulsive, psychological factors. Thus, although an actual decision is not a logically necessary condition of akrasia (see sub-section (ii)), the possibility of having decided to act otherwise is.

The conclusion to which this analysis leads, therefore, is as follows. The inconsistency and ability criteria taken together sufficiently describe cases of akrasia, as involving a person doing x, or deciding to do x, while at the same time sincerely believing that he ought not to do x, though being able not to do x and able to decide not to do x. The parallel negative formulation would cover cases of akrasia where a person does not do x, or decides not to do x, while at the same time sincerely

believing that he ought to do x, though being able to do x and to decide to do x.

C. An Illustrative Example of Akrasia

To conclude Section 1 of this chapter a typical example of akrasia, set in an educational context, will now be described in order to illustrate the criteria already suggested.

A schoolboy has a Latin set text to study. He is expected to prepare translations of sections for homework, which then form the basis of oral and written work in class. He is an intelligent boy, highly thought of by his teachers and anxious to impress both them and his fellow-pupils with his intellectual prowess. He is finding Latin translation increasingly difficult, however, and is secretly afraid that he may not possess the linguistic ability that he had hoped. By chance he has discovered a published translation of the set text, and realises that if he refers to this as a crib during his homework he will save himself time, effort and anxiety, and be able to gain high marks in class, thus maintaining his reputation. Nevertheless he acknowledges that there are good reasons, both prudential and moral, for not using the crib. Prudentially, he realises that the only way to improve his standard of translation is to gain practice in tackling new texts off his own bat; he knows that his chances of success in later examinations will be lessened if he takes the easy way out now. Morally, he is aware that he would be deceiving his teacher and gaining an unfair advantage over his classmates by using the crib in order to impress and to gain high marks.

Yet despite his sincere belief that there are these excellent reasons why he ought to attempt the translation himself, he uses the crib to do his work for him, though being perfectly capable of resisting the temptation.

How does this example satisfy the suggested criteria? Firstly, it provides an instance of genuine inconsistency. The boy sincerely believed, at the time of using the crib, that there were sound prudential and moral reasons why he ought not to do this. Not all cases of akrasia, of course, would involve such a combination of reasons, but this example has been selected to demonstrate that there may be a moral and/or prudential dimension to cases of akrasia. The sincerity of the boy's belief, in the absence of the appropriate action would need to be substantiated by one or more of Gardiner's "host of considerations". The boy might experience and perhaps demonstrate guilt and remorse as a result of his action, and resolve never to use the crib again; he might confess to his teacher or fellow-pupils; he might show extreme embarrassment on being praised for the quality of his work; he might behave with unaccustomed meekness or aggression for the rest of the day. No one particular criterion can be demanded to indicate the boy's sincere belief, but some such "consideration" is required in the absence of the appropriate action.

Secondly, the inconsistency is contemporaneous; the boy believed at the time of using the crib that he was acting wrongly. If the wrongness of his action only struck him after the event (e.g. when being praised for the excellence of his translation) he might be deemed guilty of (perhaps moral) misjudgment or shortsightedness, but he could not be held to be

weak-willed if he did not feel that he ought not to use the crib at the time when he in fact did. Indeed, to quote Matthews again, the boy might have "thought he was right in the first place" or "been influenced by insufficient reasons, which only seemed sufficient at the time"; he might, for example, have felt that he would gain more peace of mind by maintaining his reputation at school than by producing poor results from his own efforts, only to discover later that the retrospective verdict of his conscience was in fact allowing him no peace of mind. This type of case, however, contra Matthews, signifies a defect of judgment or self-knowledge, not of will.

Thirdly, the example may well involve a double decision, but does not necessarily do so. The situation can most simply be described as one in which the boy decided that he ought not to use the crib, yet decided to use it; and provided that no change of mind or revised judgment had occurred between the two decisions, they would constitute a sufficient condition for, and clear-cut case of, akrasia, producing a judgment and an action obviously at variance with each other. Yet neither decision is essential to the example. The boy may not have consciously and explicitly decided that he ought not to use the crib, in the sense of weighing up the reasons for and against, and making a considered judgment on that basis. He may have been brought up to believe that cheating is wrong and that personal endeavour is praiseworthy, and have "internalised" these principles more or less unreflectively, though being capable of producing an explicit justification if asked; in these circumstances it would be incorrect to speak of the boy "deciding" that he ought not to cheat by using the

crib, as opposed to "feeling" or "believing" that he ought not so to act. (The further problems raised by the classification of a particular situation as an instance of a general principle will be examined later in this chapter and in Chapters V - VI.) Similarly it might also be incorrect to speak of the boy deciding to use the crib, though with this example it is more difficult to rule out an "action-decision" than a judgmental one; yet the boy might have found himself glancing through the crib to help him over a particularly difficult passage, and continued to use it for the remainder of the prescribed section, without ever having consciously "decided" to do so. (To what extent such behaviour must involve a degree of "self-deception" will again be examined in Chapter V.) The "action-decision" is more easily disposed of, however, in instances of akrasia where the agent fails to do what he believes he ought to do - e.g. the boy might fail to own up to his cheating, while believing that he ought to do so, not by deciding not to but by not forcing himself to do it or not bringing himself to do it, or by putting it off or letting it slide.

Fourthly and finally, the example satisfies both parts of the ability criterion. There is no suggestion that the boy was unable to avoid using the crib, or unable to decide not to use the crib. While it is possible to imagine an instance in which a pupil is so obsessed with the desire to succeed, or so terrified by the prospect of failure (perhaps because of parental conditioning) that he literally could not refrain from consulting the crib once he realised the improvement it would make to his results, this would be an extreme and unusual form of compulsive behaviour, and there is no reason to interpret our present example in this way. Yet the possibility of such an interpretation is

sufficient to underline the kind of distinction between avoidable and unavoidable behaviour which has been shown to constitue an objection to the claims of actualism. A special form of psychological explanation is needed to account for the pupil who could not refrain from cheating or who could not decide to refrain from cheating, and such an explanation would absolve the pupil from the charge of being weak-willed, for if the psychological compulsion deprives him of the ability to act or decide otherwise, it thereby also deprives him totally of his "will-power" and his strength to resist temptation. Akrasia then requires an ability criterion, and there is no reason to suppose that the example, as described, does not satisfy that criterion; weakness in the face of temptation seems a more likely interpretation of the boy's behaviour than an irresistible, pathological compulsion.

One implication of the suggested criteria is that akrasia can refer descriptively to a wide range of situations and actions, and any attempt to provide some overall, all-inclusive explanation of akrasia will need to take account of this range. The above example shows, for instance, that akrasia is not limited to cases of moral conflict, where self-interest clashes with obligations towards others; the akrasiac may also act to secure his immediate wants while believing that his own best interests in the long run would be best served by acting otherwise. The context in which akrasia occurs may also be both non-moral and non-prudential, as in the car-washing example described in A. Or the "ought"-judgment which is not acted upon may even be an immoral one (e.g. a professional torturer may feel that he ought

to test out a newly-developed method on a victim immediately, but not have the energy or inclination to work late that evening.) The following section will accordingly examine what types of explanation can be and have been suggested for akrasia, and whether or not they provide a satisfactory and comprehensive account of akrasia in all its forms.

2. Possible Explanations of Akrasia

A number of possible explanations have already been mentioned or implied. These and others will now be examined in the light of the criteria suggested for akrasia.

i. Psychological Compulsion

Explanations of akrasia in terms of psychological compulsion have already been considered in connection both with Hare's argument (Chapter II, Section 3) and with the ability criterion (Section 1 above). The conclusion was reached that if such a compulsion meant that the person literally could not have acted otherwise, far from being a "typical case of moral weakness", as Hare claims, this would not be a case of moral weakness at all. It was for this reason that the ability criterion was proposed, which made either physical or psychological inability to act otherwise a sufficient condition for denying that the case in question could be characterised as one of akrasia. Psychological compulsion, whether stemming from overpowering emotion, "irrational" conscience, or some other cause, cannot then provide a possible explanation of akrasia, for akrasia by definition rules out such an explanation. Less extreme formulations of this

type of explanation will be considered in D below.

B. Descriptive "Ought"-judgments

Hare rightly argues that "ought" is often used in an "off-colour", descriptive way; "I ought to do x" can be construed as:-

"1. 'x is required in order to conform to the standard which people generally accept,' (statement of sociological fact).

2. 'I have a feeling that I ought to do x,' (statement of psychological fact)."[30]

These interpretations no doubt provide an explanation for many apparent cases of akrasia. What we do, or decide to do, often conflicts with our unreflective feelings or with what we think other people would expect us to do, and we may loosely express this conflict by saying, "I feel that I ought to do x, but I'm not going to do it," thus using "ought" in an "off-colour" sense.

This conflict, however, does not reflect the same inconsistency that characterises akrasia, and the situation cannot therefore count as one of akrasia. The conflict or inconsistency is in neither case between sincerely held, personal beliefs and a decision to act contrary to those beliefs. The judgment in each case is in a sense secondhand, representing either public opinion on the one hand, or the unreflective promptings of our emotions, intuitions or "irrational" consciences on the other; whereas the judgments that typify akrasia must be firsthand, in the sense that they express the sincere beliefs of the agent which he has personally arrived at and would be prepared to call his own.

Descriptive "ought"-judgments cannot, therefore, refer to or explain cases of akrasia, for they do not accord with the inconsistency criterion, just as instances of psychological compulsion failed to meet the ability criterion. It would indeed be odd to label descriptive cases as examples of "moral weakness", as one may be able to produce excellent moral reasons why one should not do what it appears one "ought" to do in Hare's sociological and psychological senses; it may well require considerable moral strength to resist such social or psychological pressures. A failure to act in accordance with this kind of "ought" does not necessarily signify a defect either in moral judgment or in moral resolve.

This explanation is equally unhelpful in non-moral cases. If "I ought to clean my car" is a statement of sociological or psychological fact (as it well might be), rather than an expression of personal belief, the situation is again not one of akrasia as the inconsistency criterion is still unfulfilled. Furthermore, my decision not to clean the car need not be irrational, (I may have more interesting things to do with my time), or symptomatic of weakness, (I may need to be very tough-minded not to give in when I see all my neighbours cleaning their cars).

Situations which can be explained in this way, therefore, whether they be moral or non-moral, cannot by definition be cases of akrasia.

C. Hypocrisy, Insincerity and Special Pleading

Hare's "typical case of moral weakness" as a case of "ought but can't" has already been discussed and rejected (A).

He also, however, offers an alternative account of "off-colour" moral judgments and "oughts" in terms of hypocrisy (or purposive backsliding), which can be sub-divided into cases of insincerity or self-deception.

If a man does what he thinks he ought not to do, therefore, Hare's explanation is either that he is physically or psychologically unable to act otherwise, or that he is being hypocritical. In the latter case he will be guilty of "special pleading", whereby an "ought" ceases to express a universal prescription and so becomes "off-colour":- "While continuing to prescribe that everyone else should act in accordance with the principle, we do not so prescribe to ourselves ..."[31] This could be either a case of insincerity, where we do not say what we really think, or a case of self-deception, where we think that we think we ought but have escaped our own notice using "ought" in an "off-colour" way.[32]

Hypocritical special pleading of this sort is no doubt a not uncommon phenomenon, but is Hare right to identify it so closely with akrasia? His argument rests on the thesis that central, full-blooded uses of "ought" cannot yield examples of akrasia, because they entail a commitment to action. This thesis was challenged in Chapter II, while in Chapter III it was argued that akrasia was by no means incompatible with central, full-blooded uses of "ought". Here, however, by allowing only "off-colour" "oughts" to feature in cases of akrasia is limited to those explanations which involve "off-colour" "oughts", i.e. psychological compulsion and hypocrisy.

A further objection to Hare's "hypocrisy" explanation is that the relationship between backsliding, special pleading,

hypocrisy and insincerity is not made at all clear. Hypocrisy and insincerity seem to be classified as types of special pleading, which in turn involves the use of non-universal prescriptions, but hypocrisy and insincerity are not internally connected to prescriptive "oughts" in the way that akrasia is.

It is for this reason that hypocrisy and insincerity, as we normally understand these terms, cannot provide explanations of akrasia, for the inconsistency criterion is again not properly satisfied in such cases and the question of akrasia accordingly cannot arise. If I am hypocritical or insincere, there is certainly an inconsistency of sorts in my behaviour: what I say or do does not accord with what I really feel or believe. But this is not the kind of inconsistency that characterises akrasia, whereby I do x though sincerely believing that I ought not to be doing x. With hypocrisy and insincerity no "ought"-judgments are involved in the inconsistency between what I do and what I really believe. I may believe that you are a fool but tell you that you are a genius, without necessarily believing that I ought not to tell you that you are a genius; the inconsistency does not imply some psychological conflict, as is the case with akrasia. I undertake a willing pretence if I am hypocritical or insincere, whereas I experience a struggle and a reluctant yielding if I am akrasiac. I may of course struggle against being hypocritical or insincere, and if I yield I will be akrasiac (if the criteria are satisfied), but even here hypocrisy and insincerity can be no more than contingent instances of akrasia; they cannot provide an overall explanation of it.

Self-deception is equally unsatisfactory as an

explanation. If I am unaware that I am deceiving myself about what I think I ought to do, there can be no inconsistency at the time of acting between what I do and what I think I ought to do. If on the other hand I am aware that I am deceiving myself (which sounds rather odd), I cannot sincerely believe that I ought to do what I in fact do not do. (The complexities of self-deception and its relevance to certain aspects of akrasia will be further examined in Chapter V.)

Special pleading, defined in terms of non-universal prescriptions, although logically related to prescriptive "ought" situations in a way in which hypocrisy and insincerity are not, is also unable to provide an explanation of akrasia. The akrasiac sincerely believes that he ought to do x, and thereby (according to the account of "ought" given in Chapter III) accepts the reasons and agrees with the principles which justify the "ought". He acknowledges the normative pressure upon him deriving from the justificatory nature of the reasons and principles, and does therefore in this sense "prescribe to himself". It is his failure to act in accordance with this "prescription" (as he sincerely believes he ought to) which characterises akrasia and which may earn the rebuke of his conscience; if no such "prescription" or obligation were felt to exist for him, the situation would not be one of akrasia, and feelings of guilt or remorse would be out of place.

Hypocrisy, insincerity and special pleading, then, are of little help in supplying an acceptable explanation of akrasia. Here's account does, however, highlight the problem of describing what exactly is involved in the akrasiac's "sincere belief that

he ought to do x", and suggests that complex, mental manoeuvres may be associated with at least some types of akrasia. This possibility will be considered further in Chapter V.

D. Overriding Wants and Desires

Psychological compulsion has already been rejected as a possible explanation of akrasia (A), but a prima facie case for a similar though less extreme type of explanation might be made out along the following lines. While we are not helplessly compelled to act contrary to our better judgment in situations of akrasia, we do often seem to be swayed, persuaded or influenced by our desires so to act. Indeed if there were not some such "stronger desire" operative, our action would appear to be without motive or explanation and thus incomprehensible. We are not incapable of acting otherwise in such situations; we simply do not choose to resist the conflicting desire, and so allow it to override what we believe we ought to do. This account seems to meet the criteria proposed for akrasia and to accord with our common-sense experience.

Various formulations of this explanation are possible, and must be examined in turn. It can, for example, be expressed in terms of a conflict between different wants or desires, or a conflict between reason and emotion. In either case there is the suggestion that the decisive factor in the struggle will be the strength or weakness of "the will", which will determine the degree of resistance offered to the particular want, desire or emotion.

It should be noted at this point, however, that to

invoke the notion of "will" as a mental organ, which can be relatively weak or strong in resisting wants and desires, is unilluminating as a possible explanation of akrasia. There is no empirical or logical reason to suppose that any such entity can be identified, and to assume its existence in order to account for why men sometimes do what they believe they ought not to do contributes nothing of independent, explanatory value. As Kenny puts it, "... one does not give a scientific explanation of a phenomenon by assigning it to an appropriate power,"[33] while Hirst makes the point even more forcefully:

> "A person does not possess a will ... We need to approach the phenomena without traditional presuppositions ... (concerning) the mechanistic model of mental organs or muscles."[34]

Similar objections can be raised against the notion of "conscience" when used to refer to a mental organ, the weakness of which allegedly produces akrasia. "Conscience" has been shown in Chapter III to be a useful concept in picking out certain logical and empirical features of moral judgment and action which in turn allow for the possibility of akrasia. Its function, however, is largely descriptive and classificatory rather than explanatory, and accordingly to suggest that akrasia occurs because one "has a weak conscience" is as uninformative and indeed as tautologous as to attribute it to "having a weak will".

Some formulations of the "overriding desires" explanation of akrasia have also to be rejected on the grounds they are merely alternative versions of the "psychological compulsion" explanation. Aristotle's account, for instance, of incontinent people being so influenced by passions, temptations and pleasures that they "must be said to be in a similar condition to men asleep, mad or

drunk",[35] appears to come into this category, for men who are asleep, mad or drunk do not have control over their thoughts and actions, and cannot satisfy the ability criterion of akrasia. Aristotle's explanation of akrasia, however, cannot be dismissed as briefly as this, as it is interestingly related to his analysis of moral knowledge and decision, which will be considered in F below.

Mill also pictures a situation of conflicting desires in which we effectively have no choice. His discussion of "higher" and "lower" pleasures is relevant to akrasia, for he claims that many men deteriorate into indolence and selfishness after their "youthful enthusiasm for everything noble", and continues:-

> "I do not believe that those who undergo this very common change voluntarily choose the lower description of pleasures in preference to the higher. I believe that ... they have already become incapable of the other ..."[36]

When "lower pleasures" exert this kind of irresistible influence, we are again outside the province of akrasia.

Another variant of the overriding desires explanation which suggests an inability to resist would be the Christian explanation of akrasia. Man is basically sinful by nature; he has fallen from a state of grace, and only by seeking God's help can he become strong enough to overcome his sinful desires and so do what he knows he ought to do:-

> "I am unspiritual, the purchased slave of sin. I do not even acknowledge my own actions as mine, for what I do is not what I want to do, but what I detest ... It is no longer I who perform the action, but sin that lodges in me. For I know that nothing good lodges in me ... for though the will to do good is there, the deed is not. The good which I want to do, I fail to do; but what I do is the wrong which is against my will; and if what I do is against my will, clearly it is no longer I who am the agent, but sin that has

> its lodging in me. I discover this principle, then: that when I want to do the right, only the wrong is within my reach ... Who is there to rescue me out of this body doomed to death? God alone, through Jesus Christ our Lord!"37

A total inability to act otherwise is clearly implied here, thus violating the ability criterion and placing the phenomenon described by Paul outside the bounds of akrasia. A further objection to this account is that it fails to acknowledge a fact of common experience, namely that we do at times act according to what we think is right. If it is then claimed that such actions are made possible only by enlisting God's aid, this explanation can be challenged on at least two grounds: firstly, on empirical grounds, many people seem to be able to do what they think they ought without enlisting God's aid, and secondly, on logical grounds, the enlisting of God's aid is surely itself a good act, which therefore cannot itself be performed without a prior enlisting of God's aid, thus involving an infinite regress. The Christian explanation of akrasia then either fails to satisfy the ability criterion, or suffers from logical incoherence.

However, not all formulations of the "overriding desires" type of explanation need suggest psychological impossibility. Less extreme versions reflect more convincingly our experiences of what it means to succumb to (and to resist) temptation. There are no doubt cases where the conflicting desire is so overpowering that resistance is psychologically impossible; but there are also cases where we feel that we have resisted temptation, and cases where we feel that we succumbed, although we could have acted otherwise. If these cases are denied or are also explained

in terms of psychological necessity, then the strong-willed man becomes as "compelled" as the weak-willed, moral strength becomes as pathological a condition as moral weakness, and a whole range of concepts concerned with action, decision, responsibility and conflict become meaningless.

The attempt to interpret all "overriding desires" explanations as species of psychological compulsion in fact blurs an important distinction which has been emphasised by philosophers from Aristotle onwards. This distinction, which can be expressed in various ways, is between two types of motivation.

Aristotle's distinction concerns "propeteia" (impulsiveness) and "astheneia" (weakness):

> "The weak do form a resolution but they are prevented by their sensibilities from keeping to it. The impulsive or headstrong are carried away by their feelings, because they have not thought about the matter that excites them at all. If they had, their behaviour might be different. For some people can hold out against strong emotion, whether painful or pleasurable, if they feel or see it coming and have time to rouse themselves - by which I mean their reasoning faculty - beforehand."[38]

Modern philosophers have made a similar sort of distinction between reflective and non-reflective forms of motivation. Benson, for instance, distinguishes between wants and desires:-

> "It is wants that enter into deliberation, are themselves decided upon after reflection, and can be ordered on a preference scale. Whereas desires are brute impulses, or dispositions thereto, which we just have, and which can be ordered according to strength."[39]

Thalberg likewise distinguishes two senses of "desire":-

> "To speak of desires is sometimes only to speak of preferences. In this sense, I most strongly desire what I prefer to do. But we also speak of cravings as desires. A person's cravings may be at variance with his preferences."[40]

Peters draws a similar, though more complex, distinction between "emotions" and "motives". Both refer to states of mind

resulting from the appraisal of a situation, but the former causally affect or distort our subsequent behaviour, whereas the latter provide us with reasons for acting in a particular way.[41]

These distinctions suggest that impulses, cravings and emotions can cause us to behave in certain ways, while wants, preferences and motives influence our behaviour through the medium of reasons. The contrast is brought out even more clearly by the ambiguity of the phrase "stronger desire". This may refer either to that which exerts more causal pressure upon one's behaviour, or to that which one prefers, thinks better, or places more value upon. These two interpretations need not coincide, as Cooper argues:-

> "For to say that I have a want or desire to-do-A-in-preference-to-anything-else is to say nothing about the intensity of that desire. There is no necessary one-one correlation between the order of priority of a man's moral principles and the order of strength of his desires."[42]

Santas makes a similar point in his comments on Plato's Protagoras, where he draws attention to "the possibility that the stronger (strongest) desire is not always the desire referring to the alternative that has the agent's higher (highest) ranking."[43]

If such a distinction is provisionally accepted, between "desires" which can be so ranked in order of intensity that the most intense will produce the greatest causal effect upon behaviour, and "wants" which can be so ranked in order of preference that the most preferred will be backed by the strongest reasons, according to the agent's evaluation, this distinction will need to be reflected in suggested explanations of akrasia.

An explanation in terms of overriding "desires" (i.e. causal impulses) will be merely a variant of the psychological

compulsion explanation, but an explanation in terms of overriding "wants" need not violate the criteria proposed for akrasia. The akrasiac, according to this account, would accept that he ought to do x, but would simply want to do y more than he wanted to do x. His "desires" would not causally override his "ought"-judgment in such a way that he could not avoid doing y; rather he would attach more weight to the reasons which he considered at the time to support y, or would allow them to weigh more heavily with him. This could apply to both moral and non-moral contexts.

Such an explanation would need to be filled out considerably. In particular, a detailed analysis of "wants" and their relationship with reasons and with action is required. There might also be important links between this explanation and both the "special pleading" explanation (C) and the distinction between justificatory and motivational factors (Chapter III). Some account must also be given of exactly how and why a person's wants can "override" the reasons backing one's "ought"-judgments. Does this indicate that akrasia implies some defect in reasoning, or failure of rationality rather than of moral character?

These points will be explored further in Chapter V, while the "defective reasoning" explanation will be considered later in this section (F). For the moment we may retain the "overriding wants" explanation for closer examination.

E. Lack of Feeling

Several of the explanations already discussed have referred to the excessive influence of desires, wants, feelings

and emotions. An alternative and contrary explanation is possible, however, for akrasia may perhaps result from an insufficiency rather than an excess of "feeling". On this account the akrasiac will fail to do what he believes he ought because he is lacking the necessary emotional drive. He may know that he ought to help old ladies across roads, but when he actually sees one hesitating at the kerbside, he does not feel sufficient care, concern or interest to induce him to do anything about it.

An extreme example of a person suffering from this apparent deficiency would be the psychopath, who lacks PHIL, to use Wilson's terminology (see Chapter I); he does not care about other people's interests and welfare, because he views them as objects to be manipulated, rather than as persons. If the "lack of feeling" explanation were accepted, and if it were allowed that a psychopath is capable of making moral "ought"-judgments (which is doubtful), it would follow that the psychopath is in a permanent state of akrasia.

Two objections can be levelled against this explanation. Firstly, is not this account yet another version of the psychological compulsion thesis? A lack of feeling is as much a causal factor as is an excess of feeling. It will affect behaviour rather than influence it through the medium of reasons. Certainly in the case of the psychopath one would feel that he could not decide to act otherwise, given his psyohological state, and thus could not fulfil the ability criterion.

Secondly, this explanation draws too crude a distinction

between reason and feeling in the area of moral judgments and action. Forming a moral judgment is not simply an intellectual process which needs an emotional nudge if it is to be translated into action. Indeed the reason why we might doubt whether a psychopath could be thought capable of making moral judgments is that he lacks the feelings, concern and imagination that are required in order to form and use concepts like "person", "hurt" and "welfare".

Lack of feeling does not, therefore, constitute a satisfactory explanation of akrasia, but it does lay emphasis upon the lack of motivation which the akrasiac feels to do what he believes he ought to do. This "affective" factor is clearly important, particularly in cases of moral akrasia where the agent does not care about or "identify with" other people's interests and welfare sufficiently to consider them to be in practice on a par with his own, and perhaps also does not care sufficiently about other people's disapproval of his moral failings. These points will be explored further in Chapters V and VI.

F. Lack of Knowledge

A further class of explanations, stemming from Plato and Aristotle, depends upon some weakness, defect or lack of knowledge. There are various versions, which must be considered separately.

The question of "weak conviction" was briefly discussed in the analysis of the Socratic argument (Chapter II). Although Socrates is attempting to deny the logical possibility of akrasia, his explanation of what appears to be akrasia is that knowledge

is not present in such cases, only opinion. The inadequacies of the Socratic argument have already been fully explored, but this explanation must now be reviewed in the light of the suggested criteria for akrasia. Can cases of akrasia be explained on the grounds that the agent did not really know (or was unsure or lacked conviction about) what he ought (or ought not) do do?

It is immediately evident that such an explanation will not suffice, as it runs directly counter to the inconsistency criterion, which requires that the agent must sincerely believe that he ought (or ought not) to do x at the time of acting otherwise. If he acts in a state of uncertainty as to what he ought to do, the situation cannot be one of akrasia, for it is doubt that is present and not an inconsistency between judgment and action. If certainty returns later, a charge of akrasia is still inapplicable, as was argued in the case of Matthews' retrospective categories (Section 1).

Aristotle tries to refine the "lack of knowledge" explanation by relating it to the practical syllogism. His argument is by no means clear, and commentators differ widely in their interpretations. For the purposes of this study, however, it is less important to determine exactly which view Aristotle himself held than it is to examine all the possible explanations that may be explicit or implicit in his account. At least four of these can be distinguished.

(i) Aristotle suggests that the distinction between dispositional and activated knowledge can help to explain akrasia:-

> "But since we use the word 'know' in two senses (for both the man who has knowledge but is not using it and he who is using it are said to know), it <u>will</u> make a difference whether, when a man does what he should not, he has the knowledge but is not exercising it, or <u>is</u> exercising it; for the latter

seems strange, but not the former."[44]

This explanation is unsatisfactory, as it merely pushes the problem one stage further back. It is self-evident that the akrasiac does not "exercise his knowledge" - if he did, there would be no akrasia - but the question is why does he not exercise it. As Ross points out, "the account which explains how the wrong can be done in the absence of this knowledge cannot explain how the knowledge has come to be absent."[45] As was noted in connection with the criterion of contemporaneous inconsistency (Section 1), the man who deliberately ignores factors which he knows would otherwise affect his judgment and decision is guilty of akrasia not at the moment of action but at the earlier point when he fails to perform the intellectual activities which he believes he ought to perform. Similarly in the case of Aristotle's "inactive knowledge", no inconsistency and hence no akrasia occurs when the action is finally taken, but both have already occurred at the earlier "intellectual" stage, and it is there that an explanation is required.

(ii) Similar objections can be brought against attempts to apply the above distinction to the universal and particular premisses of the practical syllogism. Aristotle argues:-

> "... there is nothing to prevent a man's having both premisses and acting against his knowledge, provided he is using only the universal premiss and not the particular."[46]

In other words the akrasiac accepts the validity of a principle, but fails to "actively know" that a particular instance falls under it - an explanation which again fails to meet the inconsistency criterion, as the agent must at the time of acting be in some sense unaware that there is any inconsistency. Also a further explanation is again needed for why the particular

premiss is not "used".

Aristotle does not consider the possibility of the universal premiss being "known" but not "used", though some of his commentators have done so.[47] Might not the defect in knowledge concern the principle or rule, rather than a particular instance of it? But this suggestion is open to exactly the same objections, i.e. the inconsistency criterion is not met, and a further explanation is still required.

(iii) An alternative explanation might be that the failure of knowledge concerns neither the universal nor the particular premiss but the practical conclusion of the syllogism. This is perhaps the suggestion behind Aristotle's obscure claim that "when a single judgment results from the two (premisses of the practical syllogism), the soul must ... immediately act."[48] A man might then hold a certain principle, recognise that a particular instance falls under it, and yet, as Hardie puts it, "fail to draw the conclusion ... because he did not 'put two and two together'."[49]

This account at least answers the demand for further explanations (unlike (i) and (ii)), as such a case would presumably result from defective reasoning - an inability to draw logical conclusions. On the other hand, the inconsistency criterion is still not satisfied, for the agent is "unaware" of the conclusion that he should draw, i.e. that he ought to do x. It could also be argued that defective reasoning runs counter to the ability criterion, as it causes the agent to be unable to decide to act otherwise.

(iv) Whatever type of knowledge it is that Aristotle deems to

be "absent" in some way in cases of akrasia, the need to explain that absence remains, as noted in (i) and (ii). Aristotle recognises this need, but his explanation is one that has already been considered and rejected in (D), i.e. overriding "desires".

> "... when appetite happens to be present in us, the one judgment bids us avoid the object, but appetite leads us towards it; for it can move each of our bodily parts."[50]

Incontinent people then, according to Aristotle, are psychologically compelled to behave as they do, under the influence of their appetites and passions, and "must be said to be in a similar condition to men asleep, mad or drunk".

Aristotelian interpretations of akrasia therefore fail on two counts. A person who "lacks knowledge" in any of the ways discussed above cannot satisfy the inconsistency criterion, and when the lack is further explained in terms of causal passions the ability criterion is also violated.

On the positive side, however, Aristotle's reference to the practical syllogism suggests that different types of knowledge and reasoning may well be involved in deciding what one ought to do and what one will do, a suggestion which again underlines the distinction between justificatory and motivational factors. It also suggests that akrasia may be seen to some extent as a problem of principles and instances. These points will be taken up in Chapters V and VI.

Another version of the "lack of knowledge" explanation of akrasia is suggested by the "cognitive-developmental" approach to moral behaviour, evident in the work of psychologists such as Piaget and Kohlberg. According to this approach, moral development is but one aspect of intellectual development, and moral

judgments reflect the level of intellectual reasoning which has been reached. Particularly relevant to the problem of akrasia is Kohlberg's claim to the effect that the higher the stage of moral reasoning achieved the greater will be the likelihood that a moral judgment will be acted upon.[51] The implications of this "cognitive-developmental" approach for akrasia and for moral education will be considered in Chapter VI, while an answer to the more general question of whether or not akrasia is in some sense essentially irrational will be attempted in Chapter V. At this point it need only be noted that a child or adult must be intellectually capable of sincerely believing that he ought (in its full-blooded sense) to do x, before akrasia can possibly occur, and that if that intellectual level (whatever it is) has not been reached, the agent will, on this interpretation as on the Aristotelian one, "lack knowledge" and will consequently be unable to satisfy the inconsistency criterion.

G. Logical Necessity

A different type of explanation was implicit in the argument in Chapter III for the logical possibility of akrasia. There it was claimed that all "ought"-sentences have certain features in common which include the implied backing of justificatory reasons (which do not necessarily carry motivational pressure), and an implied uncertainty of outcome. The logic of "ought", therefore, makes it logically necessary that a person who decides that he ought to do x may not want to do x and may not in fact do x, whether "ought" is being used in a moral or

non-moral context. This logical point has however received more attention from philosophers in the moral context. Thus Cooper, referring to moral concepts closely related to "ought", argues:-

> "Between principles and practice, ideal and fulfilment, there will in any normal morality be a gap - this gappiness is an essential feature of the moral life and is made manifest in the tension which may exist prior to action between principle and desire."[52]

This logical argument is clearly in accord both with the competitive tradition of morality outlined in Chapter II and with the account of "ought" and of "conscience" which was developed in Chapter III, but it has certain necessary limitations as an explanation of akrasia. If we accept (as the argument in Chapter III suggests we should) that "gappiness is an essential feature of the moral life", this explains why it is logically and empirically possible for akrasia to occur, but it does not directly explain why it does occur on particular occasions. It is logically possible for the sun to rise in the west, but this possibility would not prevent our seeking a further explanation if it actually did. The logical argument then provides a necessary background against which possible explanations of akrasia must be examined, but it is not sufficiently informative in itself.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to establish descriptive criteria for the concept of akrasia, and then to examine suggested explanations of akrasia in the light of these criteria. A number of explanations did not accord with the criteria; what they were trying to explain was not akrasia as defined. Certain explanations

remain as possible candidates, however, along with other suggestions, pointers and implications arising from this and the previous chapters.

The following chapter will draw upon these elements in developing a synthetic explanation of akrasia.

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CHAPTER V - A POSITIVE ACCOUNT OF AKRASIA

In Chapter IV it was suggested that one criterion of akrasia was contemporaneous inconsistency between judgment and action. The akrasiac voluntarily does x rather than y, despite believing that he ought to do y. He is aware that two (or perhaps more) alternative courses are open to him and he follows one of them, albeit perhaps reluctantly, guiltily and unhappily. His action need not, however, be the result of a deliberate and considered choice between the alternatives (though it often may be), for choosing implies deciding and it has already been argued that deciding is not a logically necessary element in akrasia.

Acts of akrasia are therefore a particular instance of the more general class of actions which involve doing x rather than y, where x and y are alternative courses of action which suggest themselves to the agent and which he is aware are open to him. (For purposes of classification, doing x rather than y will be taken to include cases when the question is simply whether or not to do something; x or y could thus stand for a course of inaction, x signifying not -y, and y not -x:- e.g. paying a bill rather than not paying it, or vice versa.)

The strategy of this chapter will accordingly be firstly to examine the logical features of this more general class of actions in order to discover what kind of explanation can in principle be given for doing x rather than y (1), and secondly to apply these results to the particular case of akrasia (2) while bearing in mind the possible explanatory pointers which emerged from Chapter IV.

1. Doing x rather than y

A. Actions and Alternatives

The starting-point for this enquiry must be the notion of an action. Philosophers have generally agreed that to describe a piece of behaviour as an action is to say at least two things about that behaviour. Firstly, it must be voluntary in the sense that the agent must know what he is doing and be free to choose to act otherwise if he so wishes, though he need not deliberately decide to act as he does. Secondly, it must be intentional in that it can be conceived of and explained in terms of achieving some end or purpose, though again the agent need not consciously perform this mental operation, (e.g. flicking away a cigarette end unthinkingly is an action in so far as it can be conceived of and explained in terms of getting rid of an object that is no longer wanted or usable.) Even so-called "unintentional" actions are best interpreted as intentional actions which have somehow gone wrong and produced an unforeseen and undesired result; if I unintentionally soak my neighbour while hosing the garden, my action is still to be explained in terms of aiming at some purpose (i.e. watering the flowers) which was not in this case fulfilled.

Both of these features suggest that actions are to be explained not by external, causal factors, but rather by the agent's own intentions, purposes and wants. Action is in these respects necessarily rational. Where purely external, causal explanations are possible, we may speak of irrational behaviour but not of irrational action.

A person acts then in order to achieve some purpose

which is in principle explicable by reference to his wants and choices, though choosing between alternatives is no more a necessary part of acting than is making a conscious decision. There must exist the possibility of choosing an alternative course of action for this is implied by the voluntary nature of action, but in the majority of actions that we perform we do not go through the process of deliberately choosing between alternatives.

Although choosing is therefore not a necessary pre-condition of action, nevertheless in cases of doing x rather than y, where x and y are alternative courses of action (or inaction) which suggest themselves to the agent and which he is aware are open to him, (hereafter to be referred to more briefly as "doing x rather than y") it seems reasonable to claim that the agent must have in some way preferred to do x rather than y. This would seem to be required by the intentionality of action, for if the action of doing x is in principle explicable in terms of the agent's purposes, then the action of doing x rather than y is in principle explicable in terms of the agent's preferences. The purpose achieved by doing x is seen as preferable in some way to the purpose achieved by doing y, or alternatively doing x is thought to achieve a particular purpose better than doing y. For example, I might in the former case go to bed rather than stay up to watch the midnight movie, because I prefer to get a good night's sleep rather than gamble on the dubious entertainment value of an unknown film; or I might in the latter case go to bed rather than sit up swotting for next day's examination, because I think that going to bed is a better way to achieve my purpose of passing the examination, and therefore prefer that

course of action. The sense in which "prefer" is being used here, however, will need further investigation (see C below).

B. Wanting

Further light can be shed upon cases of "doing x rather than y" by an analysis of wants and wanting. There are several senses in which these concepts appear to be used (some of which were mentioned in Chapter IV) and philosophers have disagreed over where the distinctions should be drawn.

It has been suggested by some that there is an important distinction between an "inclinational" sense of want, whereby "I want to do x" means approximately "I desire to do x" or "it would please me to do x", and an "intentional" sense, whereby "I want to do x" merely indicates that my aim or intention is to do x.[1] If such a distinction could be upheld, it would mean that the intentional sense would have a much wider field of application than the inclinational sense. Thus Griffiths describes it as covering all that we knowingly do:- "Within the limits of what we knowingly do, saying that we wanted to do what we did is vacuous, in this sense of 'want'."[2] Cooper gives a similar though more specific account of a "minimal" sense of want, claiming that it can be applied "to anything one is in favour of for any reason whatsoever."[3]

The distinction would also have at least two important implications for any analysis of "doing x rather than y". Firstly, the intentional use would link the concept of wanting very closely to the concept of action, if both the action of doing x and wanting to do x imply intending to bring about x, or if wanting can cover all that we knowingly do, as Griffiths argues. My

"doing x rather than y" would then require that I want (intentionally) to do x rather than y, and also presumably that I want (intentionally) to do x more than y.

Secondly, the two senses of wanting would not necessarily coincide, and there could consequently sometimes be conflict between them. I might "intentionally" want what I "inclinationally" did not want; for example, I might have no wish, desire, urge or inclination to visit the dentist, yet still be said to "want" to do so, either in the sense of having that intention or of knowingly performing the action or of being in favour of performing it for some reason. A conflict between the two senses might occur in a "lesser of two evils" context, or perhaps as a result of feeling oneself under an obligation to perform some distasteful duty. "Doing x rather than y" might therefore involve wanting to do x rather than y only in an "intentional" and not necessarily an "inclinational" sense.

But can the distinction between intentional and inclinational wants really be drawn as sharply as some analyses have suggested? Can there be "intentional" wants which have no element of "inclination" in them? We can approach these questions by considering Daveney's account, which is representative of arguments on behalf of the distinction.[4]

Daveney claims that there is "a use of 'want' which doesn't involve the notion of choice or inclination" (p.140):-

> "Now in saying 'He wants ...' we may mean he aims at from choice. But this need not be the case; he may be doing what he utterly dislikes. Nevertheless, 'He wants ...' can still explain his action because in its broader sense it means 'intend' simply." (p.143)

To illustrate this sense of "want" that is intentional but not inclinational, Daveney gives four examples:-

(i) "I want to cut my lawn before the grass grows too long. Oh drudgery!"

(ii) "I am having lunch early because I want to go to the meeting. Unfortunately I must attend."

(iii) "He wants to throw himself into the sea before the Devil catches him."

(iv) "I want to get the hammer in order to drive in the nail." (pp. 141-2)

Now while it is certainly possible, as in the first three examples, to characterise what is wanted as being something unpleasant, it does not necessarily follow that such wants do not "involve the notion of choice or inclination." Indeed, a more detailed examination of the four examples reveals that "the notion of choice or inclination" is implicit in each.

In (i) it is significant that without the clause "before the grass grows too long" the example does not make sense ("I want to cut my lawn. Oh drudgery!") This is because it is logically odd to describe what is wanted as "drudgery", which suggests unattractiveness and undesirability. The "want" is in fact transposed in the full sentence; what is "wanted" is to prevent the grass growing <u>too</u> long, i.e. longer than I want or desire it to be. The transposed "want" therefore, when taken in connection with the normative "too long", clearly indicates my inclinations, choices and desires concerning the appearance of my garden. Similarly in (iii) the effect of the subordinate "before ..." clause is again to transpose the "want"; what the subject of the sentence actually wants is to avoid being caught by the Devil, an inclination or desire so strong that it motivates him to throw himself into the sea. In (ii) my wanting to go to the meeting is introduced solely to explain why I am having my

lunch early, rather than at the normal time. The "because ..." clause is therefore elliptical; what I want (i.e. desire) is to get to the meeting on time, not to be late, not to be in a hurry etc. This point is confirmed, as in (i), by removing the time-reference clause ("I am having lunch early") and noting the loss of sense that results: "I want to go to the meeting. Unfortunately I must attend." If wants could be used in a purely intentional and non-inclinational way, there need be no such loss of sense. Finally in (iv), something is wanted that is not in this case characterised as unpleasant ("to get the hammer"), as "an instrument to some further end", in Daveney's words. But again it seems both arbitrary and odd to maintain that this want possesses no "inclinational" force whatsoever. My want could express a desire to achieve my purpose in that particular way (rather than using an unsuitable, awkward or dangerous tool for the job), or it could, again by transposition, refer to the further end which I desire to achieve.

Daveney's examples of "non-inclinational" wants thus depend upon grammatical oddities rather than logical features of wants. Certainly there may be degrees of inclination in wanting, and what is wanted may not always be characterised as something intrinsically or immediately attractive, but that is not to admit the possibility of "non-inclinational" wants. How could I meaningfully be said to want (to do) x if I had no inclination, motivation, preference or desire whatsoever with regard to x, whether x be intrinsically attractive, the lesser of two evils, or instrumental in achieving a further purpose?

We must conclude, then, that the distinction between intentional and inclinational wants is a false one. Wants may

contain varying degrees of inclination and may express inclination in varying ways, but the notion of "non-inclinational" wants is self-contradictory. This conclusion does not, however, lessen the importance of wants in explanations of "doing x rather than y". In this section it has so far been suggested that I "do x rather than y" because I prefer to do x rather than y, which implies that I want to do x more than y, and this want (like all wants) must be to some extent inclinational. A closer analysis is now needed of the relationship between wants and preferences, and of their function in cases of "doing x rather than y".

C. Preferring

There is clearly a close logical connection between preferring to do x rather than y and wanting to do x more than y. Preferring, though, is not an exact equivalent of wanting more, as it can be used in several different ways, not all of which can be directly translated into the "wanting more" form. Consider the following examples:-

(i) I prefer classical music to pop.

(ii) I prefer to do my own car repairs.

(iii) I prefer gardening to playing golf.

(iv) I prefer to paint the kitchen today rather than tomorrow.

The first three examples illustrate how "prefer" normally expresses a general attitude in favour of x rather than y. "Prefer" here means "tend to favour" or "tend to like more"; it indicates a disposition to favour and like certain activities rather than others. "Wanting more" or "wanting rather than" can

also be dispositional in this way (e.g. I want happiness more than riches), but is more often occurrent and specific (e.g. I want some practical help from you rather than mere advice). Example (iv) comes closer to an occurrent, specific preference, though even here it seems more natural to translate the sentence as "I would rather paint the kitchen today than tomorrow" than as "I want to paint the kitchen today more than (rather than) tomorrow." Preferences then refer to dispositions rather than occurrences, and as such describe general attitudes and likings rather than situational wants.

The general attitudes expressed in examples (i), (ii) and (iii) again cannot be directly translated into the "wanting more" form, but such a translation would necessarily be applicable to particular instances where the attitude or disposition manifested itself; for instance, if I have a record token to exchange, my alleged preference for classical music would logically require that I should want to select a classical record more than a pop record. A similar spelling-out of the preferences in (ii) and (iii) in terms of "wanting more" would be required in appropriate situations.

An interesting distinction can be drawn between examples (ii) and (iii) which bears upon the problem of (non-) inclinational wants discussed in B. Sentences of the form "I prefer x-ing to y-ing" imply that x-ing is seen as a more attractive activity intrinsically than y-ing. Thus in (iii) the suggestion is that I enjoy gardening more than playing golf, and that the preference is full-bloodedly inclinational. On the other hand, sentences of the form "I prefer to do x rather than y" do not necessarily imply that the activity of doing x is attractive or enjoyable in itself.

I may hate the chore of doing my own car repairs, yet still prefer to do this rather than pay exorbitant prices for inefficient workmanship at the local garage. The distinction between preferring x-ing to y-ing and preferring to do x rather than y can sometimes therefore reflect the distinction between wanting x more than y for its intrinsic attractions and wanting x more than y as the lesser of two evils or as a necessary instrument for achieving a further end.

There are then close logical connections between preferring and wanting more, though the two are not interchangeable. The more general, dispositional nature of preferences will have further implications for explanations of "doing x rather than y", to be examined shortly (E).

D. Seeing as Desirable

Although wants and preferences need express no positive, direct desire, what is wanted or preferred must be seen in some way as desirable, either intrinsically or instrumentally. Wanting or preferring to do x rather than y is incomprehensible unless x can be characterised by the agent as something of which he is in favour because it seems to him more desirable than y in certain important respects.

Anscombe refers to this "desirability characterisation" in describing a sense of wanting, of which "the primitive sign is trying to get":- "... all that is required for our concept of 'wanting' is that a man should see what he wants under the aspect of some good."[5]

A similar point is made by Geach:-

> "It belongs to the ratio of 'want', 'choose', 'good', and 'bad', that, normally, and other things being equal, a man who wants an A will choose ... an A that he things good and will not choose an A that he thinks bad."6

Although choosing, in the sense of consciously deliberating and selecting, does not seem to be a necessary precondition either of acting or of wanting, the logical relationships that Geach is here suggesting support the view that, in wanting to do x rather than y, x must be seen as in some way more desirable than y. ("Desirable" is substituted for "good" here because of the latter's unavoidably ethical overtones. The object of wanting need not of course be seen as ethically "good"; a robber will see the possibility of a large haul as "desirable", i.e. profitable for him, and accordingly want it.)

The various forms which the desirability characterisation can take exemplify further some of the points made in B concerning (non-) inclinational wants. I may see x as more desirable than y, because of its intrinsic attractiveness; e.g. I want to garden rather than play golf, because I prefer gardening to golfing, because I simply <u>enjoy</u> the activity more, and therefore see it as more desirable. Or I may see x as more desirable than y because of its instrumental benefits; e.g. I want to fetch a hammer rather than plug in my electric drill, because that is a more effective method of achieving my object of banging in a nail, and therefore I see it as more desirable. Or I may see x as more desirable than y, despite x's immediate and obvious unattractiveness; this could be a case of "the lesser of two evils" (e.g. I want to mow the lawn rather than allow the garden to become unkempt, despite my aversion to mowing lawns, because I have an even greater aversion to unkempt gardens, and therefore see the

lawn-mowing as the less undesirable alternative); or it could be a case of feeling oneself obliged to perform a distasteful duty (e.g. I want to break the news of my friend's death to his wife rather than leave her to hear of it from another source, because my friend had asked me to do this for him, and I see it as more desirable to respect rather than ignore his wishes.) By no means all "distasteful duties" can be interpreted in this way, however, for the normative, justificatory force of the duty and its "ought" need not be accompanied by any motivational inclination whatever, as was argued in Chapter III. This point will be further developed in Section 2 in connection with interpretations of akrasia in terms of conflicting wants.

Another significant implication may be drawn from the latter two examples to the effect that whether a person does x or y may depend upon how he sees and describes to himself the alternatives; e.g. whether or not I break the bad news will depend upon whether I see that action as respecting my dead friend's wishes or as gratuitously inflicting on myself a painful and harrowing experience. The importance of varying linguistic interpretations of situations will be elaborated in Section 2.

The desirability characterisation also draws attention to the fact that "doing x rather than y" must involve acting <u>for reasons</u>. This has already been implied in A by the intentional nature of action, for if all actions can be conceived of and explained in terms of achieving some end or purpose, it follows that there must be reasons of some kind for all actions, although the agent may not always consciously formulate them.

This general point about actions and reasons can be

made more specific in the case of "doing x rather than y", with its implications of preference, wanting more, and desirability. The reason why I "do x rather than y" is because I want or prefer to do x rather than y, and the reason for this is because I see x as more desirable in some way than y. These reasons again need not be consciously formulated by the agent, but they are required by the logic of "doing x rather than y". There must be in principle reasons of this kind for my "doing x rather than y", even though they need not be "my" reasons in the sense of my evaluating the respective desirability of the alternatives and deciding accordingly.

Preferring, wanting more, and seeing as desirable, therefore, all have an important explanatory function in providing reasons for action (of a general kind) in cases of "doing x rather than y". More needs to be said at this point, however, about the notion of "reasons for action".

E. Reasons for Action

It was argued in Chapter III, that a conflict was possible between the justificatory reasons for doing something and the agent's motivation or inclination. In cases of "doing x rather than y" the reasons for action which were shown in the last section to be logically necessary need not, however, be justificatory (in the sense of supporting an "ought"-judgment), for "ought"-judgments need not feature in such cases at all. I do x rather than y because I want to do x rather than y, because of the more desirable aspect under which I see x, but whether I ought to do x or y is a different question and one which may not

even occur to me. If "doing x rather than y", then, must in principle be explicable in terms of reasons for action, yet does not logically require the existence of justificatory reasons, a problem arises over what kind of reasons for action are operative here.

One obvious answer is to introduce the notion of "motivational reasons", thus reflecting the distinction between justification and motivation drawn in Chapter III. But there is a difficulty here in using "motivational reasons" to describe a person's wants and inclinations. Reasons suggest general principles not specific inclinations, universal rules not individual wants. To answer the question, "What was the reason for your doing that?" with "Oh, I just felt like it," is tantamount to saying "No reason at all!" Similarly, my feeling hungry cannot strictly count as the reason why I steal food; it is simply my motive for doing so. Reasons must reach for their explanatory force beyond purely situational factors which refer to particular persons and events towards generalisations that transcend the particular.[7]

These logical features of reasons will be respected if we use the term "explanatory" reasons for action rather than "motivational", provided that we bear in mind the necessarily generalised nature of the explanations to be sought. An explanatory reason for action must relate the agent's particular, situational motives to a generalised rule or principle. The explanatory reason why I stole the food could therefore be that I was starving and penniless, and that people who are starving and penniless are likely to adopt desperate methods of obtaining

food; my particular situational state is thus linked to a relevant generalisation, providing an explanatory reason for my action.

The agent may or may not be aware of the explanatory reason for his action. At least three alternatives are possible:-

(i) he may just act without consciously considering his motives or reasons at all.

(ii) he may try to explain his action by describing only his motives and situational state.

(iii) he may give a full explanatory reason by referring also to the generalised principle under which his action falls.

An observer, however, wishing to give a comprehensive explanation of the action of another, could only do so within the framework of explanatory reasons.

Several important questions arise from this account of explanatory reasons, when considered in conjunction with points already discussed in this chapter.

(i) What is the relationship between motives and seeing something as desirable?

It is analytic that if a person wants something, he sees it as desirable, but this is a formal principle necessarily lacking in specificity. What motives do is to particularise and summarise the aspect under which something is seen as desirable and therefore wanted. My beliefs and inclinations lead me to see it as desirable to fight for my country rather than become a conscientious objector; I see this action under the aspect of defending that which I love, opposing that which I hate, and expressing my loyalty and gratitude to my mother-country. These

aspects of desirability are picked out and summarised by saying that my motive is patriotism.

Motives are often used therefore as convenient, short-hand descriptions of the particular aspect under which certain things are seen to be desirable. Some motives of course, such as fear, do not directly refer to aspects of desirability, but still operate in a similar way; if my fear leads me to hide under the bedclothes rather than investigate the suspicious noises downstairs, this is because I see it as more desirable to keep out of trouble than to run the risk of antagonising a possibly dangerous intruder.

(ii) What is the relationship between justificatory and explanatory reasons?

This question will be explored more fully in Section 2, but briefly it can be said at this point that, while explanatory reasons can in principle be given for all actions, this is not the case with justificatory reasons, for these are required only when there is a doubt or query about what ought to be (or have been) done. Justificatory reasons may help to provide explanatory reasons at times, for it was argued in Chapter III that motives (which are an integral part of explanatory reasons) need not conflict with justificatory reasons and may indeed be directly supplied by them sometimes; for example, the explanatory reason for my visiting an aged and cantankerous relative could be that I consider there to be justificatory reasons which place me under an obligation to do so, and that I generally prefer to feel that I am fulfilling rather than ignoring my obligations. It was also emphasised, however, in Chapter III

that it was logically possible for a person to be insufficiently motivated to do that for which he considered there to be justificatory reasons, and that this possibility allowed for the occurrence of akrasia.

(iii) How generalised does the principle which forms part of an explanatory reason have to be?

The wider the application of the generalisation, the greater will be the explanatory force of the reason. For example, generalisations of the form, "Most people tend to ..." will have greater explanatory force than those of the form, "Some people tend to ..." which will in turn have greater explanatory force than those of the form, "He tends to ..." Even the last of these, however, would still count as a generalisation, as it suggests a regulated, dispositional pattern of behaviour which is explicable and to some extent predictable by reference to a principle.

But can a sufficiently "explanatory" reason for action really be provided by any "tend to ..." type of generalisation? Is not a further explanation always needed of <u>why</u> people tend to behave in a certain way? While it can be admitted that further, more elaborate explanations of a psychological or sociological kind can always be sought, and that such explanations, if validated, would indicate reasons for action of a greater explanatory force, this does not mean that "tend to ..." generalisations, when related to a particular agent's situation and motives, cannot constitute an adequate explanatory reason for action as outlined above; the requirement of generality implicit in the notion of "reason" is sufficiently met in such cases. It is surely arbitrary to claim that, before the advent of formalised psychology and sociology, people were unable to offer explanatory reasons for

their own and others' actions.

(iv) What is the relationship between explanatory reasons for action and wants?

At first sight it would appear to follow from the arguments already developed that wanting to do x indicates an inclination which cannot strictly count as an explanatory reason for doing x, because it refers to a specific situation and thereby lacks the necessary generality of a reason; preferences on the other hand, because of their more general, dispositional nature (see C) need not be lacking in this respect.

It sounds undeniably odd, however, to deny that a person's wants can provide a reason that explains why he acted as he did, whether what is wanted be intrinsically attractive, instrumentally useful, or the lesser of two evils. If asked, for example, "Why are you digging that hole?" my answer, "I want to build a pond," (instrumental), or "I want to indulge my passion for digging" (intrinsic), or "I want to get out of doing the washing-up" (lesser of two evils), seems to provide an excellent explanatory reason, despite the fact that in each case a situational inclination but no generalised principle is referred to.

The solution to this apparent paradox lies in the analytic connections already discussed between wanting and trying to get, and between wanting and seeing as desirable. What happens when a person's wants are given as an explanatory reason for his action is that the principle "people see what they want under an aspect of desirability and therefore try to get it," <u>because it is analytic</u>, is taken as self-evident and so is not spelt out.

The want is thus left free-standing, unsupported by an explicit principle and giving the appearance of a motive or inclination that needs the backing of an empirical generalisation (e.g. of the "tend to ..." type) to turn it into an explanatory reason. Rather similar are cases where a motive, given as an explanatory reason, implies an analytic rather than an empirical principle: e.g. "Why is he applying for such an important post?" "Ambition!" (sc. "and ambitious people by definition aim high.")

Wants then can constitute explanatory reasons of this abbreviated kind. Indeed, in view of the fact that "doing x rather than y" implies wanting to do x rather than y, wants must feature centrally in any reasons that explain why x rather than y is done.

What can be said, though, about the converse relationship between wants and reasons? Wants can provide reasons for action, but can there be said to be reasons for our wants, and if so, of what kind? It might be supposed that wants are arbitrary states of mind, inclinations that we just experience, for which it is inappropriate to ask for reasons, but the account of wants already developed in this section tells against such a view.

We do not just want something in a reasonless vacuum; we want it under a particular aspect which we see as good or desirable. Anscombe comments in this connection on the oddity of someone saying that he wants a saucer of mud: "He is likely to be asked what for."[8] Under what aspect of desirability, in other words, does he see it? As an aesthetic object, as a possession to call his own, or what? If no aspect of desirability could be specified in this way, the person could not be said to want such

an object.

It follows from this that there must be reasons for wants - and reasons again of an explanatory kind. These reasons must be derived from the intentions or evaluations of the agent, and can always be characterised in terms of his beliefs concerning the desirability of what is wanted. My reason for wanting x will always be that I see x in some way as desirable. This becomes an explanatory reason because an analytic principle is again implicit - i.e. people want what they see as desirable. The further, more fundamental question concerning the reason why people see certain things as desirable will be considered in Section 2.

Wants then can supply explanatory reasons for action, and explanatory reasons can be given for wants, because of the analytic principle implicit in each case.

Conclusion

This section has attempted to present a general account of what is involved in "doing x rather than y." It has been argued that I "do x rather than y" because I prefer to do x rather than y and want to do x rather than y, though no deliberate decision or choice is required. As all wants were shown to be to some extent "inclinational", it follows that I must also be more inclined towards, or more in favour of, x than y. The logic of wanting further requires that I see x as intrinsically or instrumentally more desirable than y, or less undesirable in cases where x is in itself unattractive. There are therefore always reasons for my "doing x rather than y", which are explanatory

and relate my situational wants and motives to a generalised principle of an empirical or implicit, analytic kind.

2. Akrasia as a special case of "doing x rather than y"

The foregoing analysis of "doing x rather than y" can now be applied to akrasia. All cases of akrasia are cases of "doing x rather than y" (by definition), but the reverse does not hold. What then is the additional feature which picks out cases of akrasia from the general class of cases of "doing x rather than y"?

Clearly this feature is derived from the special nature of the alternative courses of action, x or y, which suggest themselves to the agent. The akrasiac does not merely "do x rather than y"; according to the formulation developed in Chapter IV he does (or decides to do) x while at the same time sincerely believing that he ought not to do x, though being able not to do x and able to decide not to do x. The ability criterion expressed by the final clause must apply to all cases of "doing x rather than y", not only those of akrasia (see 1, A, above), but it is the inconsistency criterion, with its requirement of "at the same time sincerely believing that he ought not to do x", which provides the differentia. The akrasiac "does x rather than y", but the y which he does not do is also that which he sincerely believes he ought to do.

Nevertheless, if all cases of akrasia are cases of "doing x rather than y", the logical features of the latter, explored in the previous section, will necessarily apply to the former. This means that the akrasiac, in doing (or deciding to

do) x while sincerely believing that he ought to do y, must in some sense want or prefer to do x rather than y, and be more inclined towards or more in favour of doing x rather than y; he must see x as intrinsically or instrumentally more desirable (or less undesirable) than y; and there must be explanatory reasons for his doing x rather than y, which relate his situational wants and motives to a generalised principle of some kind. ("Doing x" will for the purposes of this section be taken to include intellectual activities, as described in the account of intellectual akrasia given in Chapter IV.)

Such an account raises important issues which must be considered in some detail if a satisfactory general explanation of akrasia is to be found. In particular, how can the akrasiac's sincere belief that he ought to do y be reconciled with his wants, preferences, inclinations and motives in favour of doing x? This crucial problem will be approached by way of a closer examination of both x and y in the context of akrasia - i.e. the course of action (y) which it is sincerely believed ought to be followed, and the course of action (x) which is in fact followed (or decided upon). The educational example of a typically akrasiac situation, described in Chapter IV, will again be referred to in order to illustrate the argument.

A. Sincerely believing that one ought to do y ...: the "ought"-judgement of the akrasiac

A necessary condition of akrasia is that the agent should sincerely believe that he ought to do that which he in fact fails to do. But what exactly is entailed by the akrasiac's

sincere belief that he ought to do y?

In Chapter III it was argued that "oughts" imply:-

(i) the backing of justificatory reasons and principles,

(ii) uncertainty of outcome,

(iii) the likely existence of countervailing factors.

Sincerely believing that I ought to do y, then, requires that I accept that there are good, justificatory reasons for my doing y, relating to a principle with which I agree (which may be of a moral, prudential, non-moral, or even immoral variety). My acceptance and agreement express the normative pressure of an obligation which I feel exists for me and authoritatively prescribes that I should do y. However, my "ought"-belief also implies that there are likely to exist countervailing factors, which make it uncertain whether the "ought" will actually lead to the appropriate outcome.

These features characterise all sincere "ought"-judgments, including those of the akrasiac. But are there any particular features of the akrasiac's "ought"-judgment which, while not detracting from the sincerity of his belief, help to explain why he in fact fails to do y?

The akrasiac's "ought"-judgment is clearly "non-overriding", in the sense that the justificatory reasons which are accepted as supporting the "ought"-judgment are in practice outweighed and overruled by other considerations. The reasons for this, however, relate more to why the akrasiac in fact does x, or decides to do x, than to what is involved in his believing that he ought to do y, and will accordingly be dealt with in B. The obscurity of the claim that moral "ought"-judgments must

logically be "overriding" was demonstrated in Chapter III, and so the sincerity and legitimacy of the akrasiac's "ought"-belief cannot be denied on the grounds that it is "non-overriding".

Does the akrasiac also use "ought" in a "non-universal" sense, which might indeed cast some doubts upon his sincerity? Certainly he fails to act upon his "ought", but his "ought"-judgment cannot be said to be non-universal in the sense described by Hare - "While continuing to prescribe that everyone else should act in accordance with the principle, we do not so prescribe to ourselves." As was argued in Chapter IV, the akrasiac does "prescribe to himself" or at least recognise the prescriptive force of the reasons and principles which he accepts as justificatory, which is why he experiences guilt-feelings, remorse, embarrassment etc. when failing to act in accordance with the prescription. If he did not acknowledge the authority of such a prescription, he might be guilty of indifference, insensitivity or sloth, but not (by definition) of akrasia.

The akrasiac does not, then, appear to be using "ought" in a particularly idiosyncratic or logically improper way, for his "ought"-judgment reveals all of the logical characteristics described in Chapter III. He accepts reasons as justifying a particular course of action, and in so doing interprets the situation in a certain way which expresses the normative pressure exerted upon him by that interpretation; facts become factors which weigh with him and would lead to the appropriate action, other things being equal.

Thus, the schoolboy in our example sees and interprets the fact of his gaining higher marks by using the crib as taking an unfair advantage over his classmates and therefore as a moral

factor which bears normatively upon the question of whether he ought to act in that way; alternatively he may see his resorting to the crib as lessening his chances of later academic success and therefore as a prudential factor which may influence him. These factors become reasons when they are related to a principle with which the agent implicitly or explicitly agrees - e.g. it is wrong to take unfair advantage of one's colleagues, or it is a good thing to gain academic success.

The problem about principles, however, is that they are inevitably "theoretical" in the sense that they refer to a more general, classificatory framework rather than to a specific situation. Agreeing with the generalisation expressed in a principle is a different matter from making a specific decision to act in a particular situation. The distinction may be sharpened by noting that a "principle-decision" is always a decision <u>that</u> ... (e.g. that it is wrong to lie), whereas an "action-decision" is always a decision <u>to</u> ... (e.g. to tell the truth); our schoolboy decides <u>that</u> he ought not to take unfair advantage of his classmates, but he also decides <u>to</u> use the crib. Principles then have a "cool-hour" quality, well described by Cooper as follows:-

> "... a man's moral principles are those of his principles of action which in a cool hour he is least prepared to abandon belief in, however much he may be tempted to deviate from them in the heat of the moment."9

This and other characteristics of principles, both moral and prudential, will be further examined later in this section.

The akrasiac then sincerely believes that he ought to do y, without violating the logical features of "ought", previously discussed. His "ought"-judgment, though ultimately "non-overriding" in practice, carries with it an acceptance of justificatory

reasons for doing y, relating to a principle with which he agrees. It is because of his acceptance and agreement that guilt, remorse or some other "behavioural or non-behavioural consideration" results from his failure to act in accordance with the reasons and principles he acknowledges as justificatory.

Why then does he not do y? Part of the answer must lie in the tension that has already been shown to exist between the various logical features of "ought" - between the normative pressure exerted by justificatory reasons and principles on the one hand, and the likely existence of countervailing factors leading to uncertainty of outcome on the other. This tension, which is highlighted in akrasia, means that "ought"-judgments are essentially Janus-faced. They reveal characteristics which suggest both the translation and the non-translation of the "ought" into action, but it is only in cases of akrasia that the tension results in non-translation; in other cases the normative pressure exerted by justificatory reasons and principles <u>is</u> translated into action, but with akrasia the agent does not so act because other factors are operative. These factors provide the key to the problem of akrasia.

Believing that one ought to do y is to do y, in the absence of countervailing factors. Griffiths, in his discussion of the status of this principle, concludes that it is one "necessary to the explicability of the rational behaviour of men."[10] Such a principle acknowledges the potentially conflicting features of "ought"; it expresses both the presumption in favour of doing y (because of the normative pressure of "ought") in the <u>absence</u> of countervailing factors, and also the possibility of <u>not</u> doing y in the <u>presence</u> of such factors. The explanation of

akrasia, therefore, seems to lie within these "countervailing factors", which in turn will derive from the course of action x which the akrasiac prefers in some way to the course of action y, despite his belief that he ought to do y.

Thus, explanations of the akrasiac's behaviour do not depend upon irregularities in his "ought"-judgment, for that judgment contains the necessary features required by the logic of "ought", and is neither idiosyncratic nor "off-colour". It depends rather upon the "countervailing factors", in whose absence the "ought"-judgment would be acted upon, but in whose presence an alternative course of action is preferred. That preference will form the subject of the following section.

B. ... yet doing x: the action of the akrasiac

It has been argued that the akrasiac in doing (or deciding to do) x rather than y must in some sense want or prefer to do x rather than y; he must be more inclined towards or more in favour of doing x rather than y; he must see x as more desirable, or less undesirable than y; and there must be explanatory reasons for his doing x rather than y, which relate his situational wants and motives to an explanatory principle. It is these wants, preferences, inclinations and motives, therefore, which supply the "countervailing factors" referred to in A.

Akrasia involves a conflict of reasons. The justificatory reasons why y ought to be done, relating to a moral, prudential or pragmatic principle and accepted by the akrasiac in the sense described in A, conflict with the explanatory reasons why x is done, relating to an explanatory principle and

to the akrasiac's motives. These motives find expression in immediate, situational wants which, at the time of acting or of deciding to act, override the normative prescriptions and the "theoretical" principles which support the akrasiac's sincere belief that he ought to act otherwise. He wants to do x rather than y, in the sense that he attaches more weight to the motivational considerations as to why he should do x than he does to the justificatory considerations as to why he ought to do y, and accordingly he does x.

Thus, our schoolboy, although accepting in the way already described the moral and prudential reasons why he ought not to use the crib, nevertheless wants to maintain his academic reputation with his teachers and classmates by gaining high marks in class, and this want weighs more heavily with him at the time of acting (or of decision) than does his resolve not to use the crib. His motives (e.g. pride, ambition, egotism, etc.) lead him to see the maintenance of his reputation as the more desirable alternative, and supply explanatory reasons for his conduct when linked to a relevant principle (e.g. he is the sort of person who will do anything to avoid losing face, or more generally, ambitious students dislike and fear academic failure.)

This interpretation of akrasia is supported to a large extent by Kenny's account:

> "... if he (the akrasiac) fails to do what he ought to do, this means that for the time being he wants something else more than he wants not to be unjust, or unkind, or foolish. But his failure in no way counts against his genuinely believing that his action is unjust, or whatever."[11]

Kenny's emphasis upon the akrasiac's wants is helpful, but his view of "moral weakness ... as a particular case of the

problem of conflicting wants"[12] differs significantly from that which has here been suggested, for although it has been argued in this chapter that the akrasiac wants to do x (which he does) rather than y (which he believes he ought to do), it does not follow from this that he must want to do y at all. Wants were shown in Section 1 to be necessarily "inclinational" in that they must imply some degree of motivation, preference or desire, but it is quite conceivable (as was shown in Chapter III) that in some cases one may have no such inclination towards doing what one nevertheless believes one ought to do. Acknowledging the normative pressure of an "ought" and the justificatory force of reasons and principles does not entail wanting to act upon the "ought" and in accordance with the reasons and principles. Indeed, it is this non-entailment which produces the distinction between "ought" and "should", and between justificatory and motivational factors (see Chapter III), and consequently the possibility of akrasia. The notion of a "distasteful duty" clearly demonstrates that we need not want to do what we believe we ought to do. Even though our acknowledgment of the normative pressure of justificatory reasons and principles might be said to require that we "see it as desirable" that the action which we believe we ought to do should be done, it does not follow that we necessarily "see it as desirable" (and so want) to do the action ourselves, despite our belief that we ought to do it. We may see as desirable the bringing about of states of affairs which we are not ourselves motivationally inclined to bring about.

Akrasia is better described, then, as a particular case of wanting to do x rather than y than as a particular case of

conflicting wants, as Kenny maintains, though Kenny's account will in fact fit many instances of akrasia, in particular prudential ones as will be illustrated later in this section. The terminology of akrasia and its implications, however, have by now been sufficiently explored. What is needed at this point is an examination of certain suggestive features of the akrasiac's action of doing x, which will help to fill out the somewhat formal account so far offered and to provide some pointers of educational relevance which can be further developed in the following chapter. Three such features will be considered in some depth; they are to some extent interrelated, but for the sake of clarity will be discussed under separate headings, as follows:-

(i) the dishonesty factor

(ii) the language factor

(iii) the immediacy factor.

(i) The Dishonesty Factor

The akrasiac, it has been argued, sincerely believes that there are justificatory reasons why he ought to do y; yet there must also exist explanatory reasons why he in fact does x, deriving from his motives and wants which lead him to see x as more desirable than y. The reason why he does x rather than y is simply that he wants to do x rather than y, despite his acknowledgment of the justificatory reasons for doing y.

What the akrasiac is doing, therefore, is to acknowledge the normative pressure of the justificatory reasons (by making his "ought"-judgment), but to fail to acknowledge the more immediate, motivational pressure of his wants, which supply the

explanatory reasons. The only evidence for this motivational pressure is his action of doing x or his decision to do x, but this action or decision conclusively proves its existence and indeed its dominance. In making reference only to his belief that he ought to do y, then, the akrasiac is failing to make explicit, to himself or to others, those factors which are in fact weighing most heavily with him at the time of his decision or action (i.e. his motives and wants), and which are revealed by that decision to do x or that action of doing x. Our schoolboy, for example, in forming his "ought"-judgment, makes explicit the justificatory reasons why he ought not to use the crib, but fails to acknowledge his opposing motives and wants which go to provide the explanatory reasons for why he in fact decides to use it.

This "failure to acknowledge" is closely akin to self-deception, which, though dismissed as a straightforward explanation of akrasia in Chapter IV, helps to characterise that feature of the akrasiac's behaviour at present under consideration. Self-deception also involves a "failure to acknowledge", or as Fingarette describes it, a failure to spell-out certain features of our engagement in the world:[13] "the self-deceiver is one who is in some way engaged in the world but who disavows the engagement, who will not acknowledge it even to himself as his."[14] By "engagement" Fingarette intends to cover "such categories as aims, reasons, motives, attitudes and feelings ..,"[15] all of which figure prominently in the "countervailing factors" of akrasia.

An important feature of akrasia, therefore, appears to be a degree of self-deception or intellectual dishonesty, in that

the agent fails to acknowledge, avow, spell-out or make explicit those factors which weigh most heavily with him in the situation facing him. This process is facilitated by ambiguities contained within the judgment, "I believe that I ought to do y", for at least three interpretations are possible.

(a) "I believe that I ought to do y" may be a judgment that is both straightforward and final, in that only one type of reason (i.e. justificatory) is motivationally operative upon the agent. To take another educational example, a teacher may believe that he ought to make allowances for a particular pupil's misbehaviour because of serious domestic pressures which he knows to exist and which he feels constitute justificatory reasons for treating the boy leniently rather than punishing him. Furthermore, the teacher does not want to punish the boy; he likes him on a personal level, he dislikes punishment generally, and he feels that he is more likely to establish mutual trust and understanding by discussing the boy's problems with him informally. The teacher's decision then is in accord both with his wants and preferences and with his educational ideals and values; he wants to do what he believes he ought to do. He is free of doubt, conflict and self-deception as he forms his "ought"-judgment, which will, according to Griffiths' principle, entail action (given that the agent is a rational being), as countervailing factors, the likelihood of which is implied by the logic of "ought", are not in this case present.

(b) "I believe that I ought to do y" may, perhaps more commonly, be a judgment that is still final but not straightforward, in that conflicting reasons impinge upon the agent yet

he still comes down in favour of the justificatory ones. To continue with the example used in (a), a second teacher may acknowledge the justificatory reasons for treating the boy leniently just as the first teacher does, yet his overall view of the situation may be very different. This teacher dislikes the boy personally, has no objections in general to the use of punishment, and also wants to impress the Headmaster, who believes strongly in the exercise of firm discipline and who is about to write a reference for the teacher in question. The teacher wants to get a good reference, for he is ambitious and eager to move on; he also wants to punish the boy for the disruption he is causing. These motives and wants supply explanatory reasons for his punishing the boy, but these conflict with the justificatory reasons for treating him leniently, which he considers valid on both moral and educational grounds. In considering the respective weight of these conflicting factors, the teacher sees it as more desirable to stick to his moral and educational principles than to indulge his personal dislike of the boy and to use him as a pawn in the promotion stakes. His "ought"-judgment, though in this case subject to doubt and conflict (but again not self-deception), leads accordingly to the same action as in (a) but as a result of a different judgmental process.

(c) "I believe that I ought to do y" may also be a judgment that is not straightforward, nor final in the sense that (a) and (b) are, for in this case the final action or decision is not that which the justificatory reasons support. A third teacher, for example, may face exactly the same situation as the second teacher in (b), yet decide to punish the boy. His analysis of

the boy's behaviour and of the best way of dealing with it is identical with that of the teachers in (a) and (b), and his sincere belief that he ought to treat the boy leniently expresses his acknowledgment of the justificatory reasons for so acting. In this case, however, ambition and personal dislike constitute countervailing factors of greater motivational influence. He sees it at that time as more desirable to put the boy in his place, impress the Headmaster, and get a good reference than to follow the dictates of his moral and educational principles. Accordingly he does what he sees as more desirable in preference to what he believes he ought to do but wants to do less (or perhaps not at all). Despite his failure to act as he believes he ought, the sincerity of his belief may be demonstrated by any of Gardiner's "host of behavioural or non-behavioural considerations." The teacher may feel uneasy while punishing the boy, or guilty and remorseful after the event; he may go out of his way to show consideration to the boy next day (perhaps to an excessive extent); he may be bad-tempered or withdrawn at home; he may tear up his Headmaster's reference, or even decide to give up teaching; he may try to convince himself and others that the boy has benefitted greatly from being punished, despite the lack of any evidence to support his contention. Any of these or countless other such "considerations" is sufficient to indicate the sincerity of his "ought"-judgment. There is no reason to suppose that this judgment would not have been acted upon in the absence of countervailing factors, but the judgment is not a final one as in (a) and (b). This then is a typical case of akrasia.

If the third teacher describes his appraisal of the situation by referring <u>only</u> to his belief that he ought to treat

the boy leniently, he is guilty of intellectual dishonesty and self-deception, for he is revealing and portraying only a part of his overall judgment, and failing to acknowledge the motivational factors which in fact weigh most heavily with him. The ambiguities of "ought"-beliefs described above allow him to imply that his judgment was <u>really</u> intended to be final (as in (a) and (b)), but that some causal factor, external to that judgment, prevented him from acting upon it. His apparently mysterious behaviour is thus attributed to the obscure phenomenon of "weak will", whereas the real explanation is no different from that which covers all cases of "doing x rather than y" - he wanted to do x rather than y because he saw it at the time as more desirable. Failing to admit and spell-out these wants and to include them explicitly when portraying his <u>overall</u> judgment and appraisal of the situation helps to create the apparently explanatory concept of "weakness of will".

An important feature of akrasia then is the failure to acknowledge those factors and reasons which in fact weigh most heavily with the agent, but is this failure to be construed as an inability or as a deliberate policy? The ability criterion of akrasia would not necessarily be violated by a psychological inability to spell-out one's motives and wants in a particular situation, as this need not entail a further inability to act or decide otherwise in that situation. The akrasiac teacher in (c) may be psychologically unable to <u>acknowledge</u> that he is placing a higher priority upon personal advancement than upon his educational ideals, but this does not mean that he is unable <u>to act</u> or decide to act otherwise (e.g. by reviewing the situation,

seeing it in a different light, etc.) Some cases of akrasia may thus carry with them an inability to acknowledge motivational factors, and this possibility will be further examined in the following chapter.

Certain logical features of akrasia discussed earlier, however, suggest that the "failure to acknowledge" is likely to be more akin to a deliberate policy. Wilson appears to support this view by describing the akrasiac as having a "counter-syllogism" and "following different rules"; this may result from "unconscious beliefs and emotions ... (but) it is often the case not that S cannot, but that in an important sense S does not went to, perform the required action."[16] (author's italics)

Fingarette advances a similar argument with reference to self-deception:-

> "This inability to spell-out is not a lack of skill or strength; it is the adherence to a policy (tacitly) adopted ... The self-deceiver commits himself to avoid spelling-out his commitment ... (and) has decisive reasons for his commitment not to spell this engagement out."[17]

Similarly the akrasiac may have decisive reasons for tacitly adopting a deliberate policy of "non-acknowledgment", and these reasons are likely to arise from the typically moral context within which akrasia is logically situated. Two indications of this context were given in Chapter IV:-

(a) the immorally resolute man cannot be guilty of akrasia, as there is no inconsistency between his "ought"-judgments and his actions, and

(b) akrasia implies some strength of will or moral impetus, but not enough; a complete lack of strength denotes impotence or incapacity, not weakness.

These two points suggest that the moral akrasiac is far from being totally amoral. Indeed the conflict which characterises cases of moral akrasia presupposes an agent who is concerned with the moral question of what he ought to do. Sincerely believing that one ought to do y and acknowledging the reasons that justify this requires moral awareness and sensitivity, without which cases of moral akrasia could not occur. (Prudential cases will be considered separately below.)

Moral akrasia then takes place within a moral framework; it provides grounds for moral censure of an agent who is aware of the moral dimensions of a situation. Given such a framework, it is hardly surprising that the akrasiac acknowledges and spells-out justificatory reasons more openly than he does his wants and motives. His awareness of justificatory reasons is morally praiseworthy, whereas an admission of the greater motivational influence of his non-moral wants and motives would invite moral criticism. So he makes explicit only the morally respectable reasons backing his "ought"-judgment and not the morally blame-worthy factors which in fact lead him to act as he does. His "decisive reasons for tacitly adopting a deliberate policy of non-acknowledgment" are, therefore, to seek a last line of defence against moral censure, either from others if he is revealing his judgmental processes publicly, or from his own conscience if his "acknowledgment" and "non-acknowledgment" of various factors is a purely private matter. In either case, to spell-out his overall judgment of the situation would be to declare, either to others or himself, his real priorities, i.e. the greater importance he attaches to non-moral than to moral considerations. By making explicit only the moral and "non-final" elements in his overall

judgment, however, he can attribute his "lapse" to weakness of will, a notion which, as previous chapters have shown, can easily (though mistakenly) be given a causal, compulsive interpretation, which if accepted would exonerate the akrasiac from moral responsibility, or at least lessen his culpability.

Cases of prudential akrasia reveal similar characteristics. Even when the "ought"-judgment refers solely to the agent's own (usually longer-term) interests, the justificatory reasons backing that judgment still carry with them overtones of greater moral, or at least social, respectability than would an open admission of the agent's (usually more immediate) wants and motives. If, for example, our akrasiac schoolboy's judgment that he ought not to use the crib is backed by purely prudential reasons (i.e. he needs practice in tackling translations himself in order to increase his chances of academic success later), those reasons are more likely to win moral or social approval than his desire, by fair means or foul, to outdo his classmates and to gain praise from his teacher. Similarly, the akrasiac heavy smoker who acknowledges the prudential, justificatory reasons why he should give up (i.e. to improve his health and life expectancy), recognises that these reasons are more praiseworthy than his desire for immediate sensual gratification in the form of an addictive tranquiliser. In general, the reasons supporting a prudential "ought"-judgment presuppose the premise that, other things being equal, self-advancement and self-preservation (if not pursued to the detriment of others) are more justifiable and acceptable than self-neglect and self-destruction; prudence is more often viewed as a virtue than as a vice. The explanation of the prudential akrasiac's failure to spell-out his overall judgment and his attribution of his "lapse" to weakness

of will is, therefore, basically the same as in the case of the moral akrasiac.

Even cases of akrasia where "practical oughts" are involved can be similarly interpreted. If I claim to know and believe that I ought to keep my eye on the ball, yet in fact fail to do so, I am again spelling-out only the justificatory reasons supporting the "ought", and not the countervailing factors (e.g. I am too lazy to practise hard enough to get it right, and consequently do not want to make the necessary effort), because those countervailing factors even in such cases normally carry with them overtones of moral censure.

One central feature then of all forms of akrasia appears to be a degree of intellectual dishonesty. The akrasiac fails to acknowledge, to himself or to others, those countervailing factors which outweigh for him the justificatory reasons backing his "ought"-judgment. This failure, whether due to a psychological inability or a deliberately adopted policy, stems from the logical framework of moral and social approval within which akrasia typically occurs. The effect of concealing this failure and of invoking the explanatory, quasi-causal notion of "weak will" is to mitigate the blame which would attach to an admission of the akrasiac's overall judgment of the situation.

(ii) The Language Factor

The akrasiac, in wanting to do x rather than y though believing that he ought to do y, is faced with a situation which offers him alternative courses of action or inaction. But there

is no unique way of describing any situation or any alternatives. Different people interpret the same situation differently and classify the same alternatives differently. One person may view the situation economically, another aesthetically, another morally, another metaphysically, and so on.

The aspect under which a situation is seen can be characterised only through the medium of language, spoken or unspoken. As language, and especially moral language, often carries with it overtones of approval and disapproval, of exhortation and prohibition, the terminology used to describe the alternatives facing the akrasiac will be an influential factor in determining his judgment of the situation and his response to it.

The akrasiac does not fail to see situations in moral terms. He does not lack what Wilson labels "relevant alertness."[18] This is an important problem in moral education, but it is not the problem of moral akrasia, for the akrasiac in sincerely believing that he ought, for justificatory reasons, to do y is acknowledging the moral dimensions of the situation. The schoolboy in our example does not see his dilemma of whether or not to use the crib simply as a question of whether he will get found out or whether he will be able to doctor his own translation well enough to fool his Latin master; he sees it (partly at least) as a question of whether he morally <u>ought</u> to use the crib, thereby gaining an unfair advantage over his classmates and winning praise under false pretences. (The prudential version will again be considered separately.)

Yet if the akrasiac is able to see situations and alternatives in moral terms, why does the normative pressure of

moral language not influence his final decision or action? If he possesses sufficient moral sensitivity to be able to apply moral concepts to relevant situations, why does his formulation of a moral interpretation not bite upon his behaviour?

Three possible solutions suggest themselves:-

(a) Perhaps moral concepts, though correctly used by the akrasiac, for psychological reasons simply fail to motivate him; he experiences none of their normative pressure, which he realises they exert on most people. The schoolboy, for example, may see his action as being "unfair", but for psychological reasons the concept of unfairness may not influence his final judgment or action in any way.

(b) Perhaps at the moment of acting or deciding to act (or immediately prior to it) the akrasiac fails to concentrate sufficiently upon the moral interpretation or in Wilson's terminology to "think thoroughly" about it.[19] He focusses his attention upon the "countervailing factors" and allows them to occupy a more prominent position in his appraisal of the situation. On this account the schoolboy would allow the prospect of his gaining higher marks and his fear of failure to occupy his attention at the expense of the moral considerations of fairness.

(c) Perhaps at the moment of acting or deciding to act (or immediately prior to it) he fails to present the moral interpretation to himself attractively enough; the colours in which he paints the moral picture do not have as great a motivational appeal as those of the non-moral picture. The schoolboy might in this case see his using of the crib as an instance of "lying" (to his teacher) rather than of "cheating" (his classmates), while

not considering truth-telling (especially to an authority figure) to be an overriding obligation which he positively wants to fulfil, as might be the case with fairness (especially to one's peers). The less attractive the moral interpretation the less likely it is to be translated into action in the face of countervailing factors.

Of these three possibilities (a) can be discounted for the same reasons that "lack of feeling" was ruled out as a possible explanation of akrasia. If moral concepts cannot, for psychological reasons, exert any influence upon the agent, then he is clearly able to act only in response to his non-moral wants and motives, and is unable to decide to act otherwise. Such a case, of which psychopathic behaviour is an obvious example, would fail to meet the ability criterion and would thereby fall outside the category of akrasia.

Either (b) or (c), or a combination of the two as they are not mutually exclusive, seems to offer the most likely solution, without violating any logical features of akrasia. Some examples of akrasia may well accord best with (b), others with (c), and others with (b) and (c) in combination. In all cases, however, a further explanation will be needed of why the akrasiac treats the moral alternative as he does.

In (b) the reason why the akrasiac fails to concentrate sufficiently upon the moral interpretation is presumably because of the strength of the countervailing factors in that particular situation; he sees x as so much more desirable than y that he allows y to fade from his attention. Our schoolboy sees it as so desirable, and thus wants so much, to maintain his reputation and

avoid criticism that he allows the moral alternative of telling the truth or playing fair to go out of focus in his viewing of the situation. A similar reason might also be given for (c): because of the strength of the countervailing factors the akrasiac may consciously choose a less attractive moral interpretation (e.g. telling the truth to an authority figure rather than playing fair with one's colleagues), knowing that it will have correspondingly less motivational influence upon him and that he will thereby find it less difficult to do what he really wants most to do. A less devious explanation, however, is also possible for (c), as the agent may simply have seen only one way of interpreting the situation morally, and that may happen to be an interpretation which does not weigh so heavily with him as another more attractive one might.

On a more general level, both (b) and (c) can be further illuminated by recalling certain features of moral principles discussed earlier. A moral interpretation must necessarily refer, implicitly or explicitly, to moral principles for purposes of classification and justification, and it has been argued that moral principles possess a theoretical, generalised and "cool-hour" quality which enables them to be expressed only in decisions that ... and not in decisions to ... These features of moral principles cannot fail to detract from the motivational influence of a moral interpretation in comparison with that of the agent's more immediate wants. The principles of fairness and truth-telling upon which the schoolboy's moral interpretation is based are necessarily less specific than the situational motives which make him want to keep gaining high marks and praise. Our motives and

wants are an integral part of the situation and our experience of it, but a framework of moral language has to be imposed upon that situation before moral principles can be seen to be applicable to it. The reason why the akrasiac in (b) and (c) treats the moral alternative as he does, therefore, may be partly due to the fact that moral concepts and principles cannot be directly identifiable, self-evident elements in our experience of situations.

These points concerning moral concepts and principles are not directly relevant to cases of prudential akrasia. However, in so far as prudential reasons carry with them overtones of moral or social approval (see (i)), they could be said to refer to quasi-moral alternatives, which the prudential akrasiac treats in the same way as the moral akrasiac treats moral alternatives. Explanations (b) and (c) could thus be applied equally to prudential akrasia: for instance, the akrasiac smoker may fail to concentrate sufficiently upon and/or fail to present to himself attractively enough the quasi-moral alternative of improving his health and prolonging his life. The reasons for his failure though cannot be sought in the logic of moral language, as has been suggested in the case of the moral akrasiac, for moral language is not directly involved. The quasi-moral alternative, however, shares with the moral alternative the quality of "remoteness", though not in an identical sense. The "remoteness" of the prudential akrasiac's "ought"-judgment will accordingly be examined in detail in the following section on the Immediacy Factor (iii).

Linguistic interpretation is also a relevant factor in cases where "practical oughts" are not acted upon. The explanation

for why I fail to keep my eye on the ball may well be that I see the alternatives before me as either continuing to play at my present standard or becoming a moderately efficient player by putting in hours of arduous practice, and the latter alternative does not sound sufficiently attractive to motivate me to try and play as I believe I ought.

One final observation needs to be made concerning the language factor. The fundamental question of why people see certain things as desirable was briefly mentioned at the end of Section I. To tackle such a question comprehensively would be beyond the scope of this study, but it is necessary to note at this point the crucial role played by language in the process of "seeing as desirable", especially in view of the possible educational implications of this which will be considered in Chapter VI.

One way, and perhaps the most important way, in which people, including children, come to see things as desirable and valuable (or the reverse) is by exposure to the prescriptive and persuasive functions of language. To accept that a particular series of events and actions represents "persecution", "exploitation", "liberation" or "reform", for instance, is to adopt a certain evaluative stance which is delineated by whatever interpretative concept is used. One of the reasons, then, why we initially come to see certain things as desirable or otherwise may well be that they are presented to us, apparently descriptively, in language which carries overtones of approval and disapproval; and one of the reasons why we continue to a considerable extent to hold reasonably consistent views as to what we think of as desirable or otherwise may well be our adoption of a linguistic framework of interpretation which crystallises our evaluative attitudes and

helps to keep them constant. If we have been brought up to think of policemen, for example, in terms of heroic guardians of law and order, and friendly servants of the public, we will be in possession of an established set of evaluative concepts which will, other things being equal, dispose us in favour of helping and respecting the police rather than impeding and despising them; it will need a drastic disillusionment and a deliberate re-orientation of values for us to come to see policemen as Fascist pigs. The concepts we use and the values we hold are radically intertwined.

Language then in various respects contributes significantly to explanations of akrasia. The concepts used by the agent to portray the situation and the alternatives facing him constitute his interpretation and evaluation, which will in turn govern his response. The moral akrasiac uses moral concepts to form his moral interpretation of the situation, but for a variety of reasons sees this as less attractive motivationally than the non-moral interpretation. Language, by reason of its close connections with evaluation, may also help to answer the further question of <u>why</u> people see certain things as more or less attractive and desirable.

(iii) <u>The Immediacy Factor</u>

Cases of prudential akrasia, while not directly illuminated by the account of moral interpretations given in (ii) above, reveal on investigation a further, related, characteristic feature which will be shown to be applicable in part to cases of moral akrasia as well. This feature is concerned with the

immediacy of countervailing factors and the corresponding remoteness of justificatory reasons. The nature of this immediacy and remoteness will form the subject of this sub-section.

Prudential akrasia, like moral akrasia, involves an inconsistency between "ought"-judgments and action, resulting from a conflict between what the agent sincerely believes he ought to do and what he most wants to do. What typifies prudential cases, however, is that the conflict seems to be describable also in terms of the agent's present and future wants, or his short-term and long-term interests. The akrasiac smoker, for example, wants to enjoy good health in the future (and thus believes that he ought to give up the habit), but also wants at present to soothe his nerves by enjoying a cigarette. Similarly the akrasiac schoolboy wants to achieve future academic success (and thus believes that he, prudentially, ought not to use the crib which will prevent him from gaining the necessary practice at translation), but also wants at present to gain high marks in class and maintain his reputation. The prudential akrasiac then, though acknowledging the justificatory reasons which support his longer-term wants, allows his present wants to weigh more heavily at the time of acting or deciding to act; immediate, situational factors are seen as more important than more remote, future considerations. Again, as in cases of moral akrasia, an element of intellectual dishonesty is evident here in the failure to admit explicitly that the countervailing factors do in fact outweigh the justificatory reasons in the final, overall assessment of the situation.

The prudential akrasiac's conflict between present and future wants can also be portrayed in terms of his self-concept.

In cases of moral akrasia the conflict is typically between self-interest and the interests of others; even in examples where it appears that self-interest does not enter in (e.g. I may have to choose between acting in such a way as to further the interests of person A at the expense of person B or vice versa, and decide for situational reasons to favour A while believing that I really ought to favour B), my decision still results from my personal and self-regarding wants, motives and interpretations, (e.g. I like A more than B, and would prefer to do him a good turn.) A parallel account of prudential akrasia can be given, whereby the agent sees his future self, along with its wants and interests, as in some sense "other" than his present self, and thus exerting a less immediate motivational influence. To the akrasiac smoker the image of a possible, future, non-smoking self will appear very much as "another" self, quite alien from his present self with its present wants, and perhaps unattractive and undesirable in certain respects, despite the prospects of better health. The akrasiac schoolboy will likewise see his future self, possibly gaining a university place in several years' time as a result of his efforts and application now, as a remote and different person from the one who will tomorrow at school have to show how well he has done tonight's homework. In both cases the difficulty lies in trying to identify with the future self, whereas there is no problem in identifying with the present self, its interests and its wants, as the agent who acts, or decides to act, in the light of these wants is that present self; the greater difficulty of future identification is thus grounded in logical, as well as psychological, considerations.

The prudential akrasiac's preference for the wants and interests of his present rather than his future self recalls Socrates' explanation of all apparently akrasiac behaviour as involving mistakes in "weighing pleasures against pleasures" and so exaggerating the size of a pleasure (or pain) which is close to us in time, (see Chapter II, Section 2). An objection to our interpretation of prudential akrasia in terms of a conflict between present and future wants must be considered at this point, however, for might not the prudential akrasiac be said to be faced with conflicting present wants, rather than with a present versus a future want? According to this account, the smoker would want both to have a cigarette and to refuse one now, and the schoolboy both to use the crib and to do the work himself now. However, the argument in Section 1, B, on inclinational and intentional wants suggests that this is a misleading way of describing the conflict. The statements "I want to give up smoking before I damage my health" and "I want to do the work myself in order that I may become better at translation" recall Daveney's so-called "non-inclinational" wants - e.g. "I want to cut my lawn before the grass grows too long". But, as with Daveney's examples, the akrasiac's apparent "wants" are in fact transposed. What the smoker really wants is not now to refuse a cigarette but to enjoy better health in the future; and what the schoolboy really wants is not now to do the work himself and thereby gain low marks, but to be better at Latin translation in the future. The prudential akrasiac's conflict then is better described as being between present and future wants (which are to some extent "inclinational" like all wants, as argued in Section 1, B), than between a present

"intentional" and a present "inclinational" want. The distinction between present and future, or immediate and remote, considerations seems central to the problem of prudential akrasia.

The respective motivational influences of present and future wants are described by Gauthier as being such that only the former can impel us to act, while the latter can only determine reasons for us to act now.[20] The terms in which Gauthier draws this distinction cannot be unreservedly accepted, as the notion of "impelling wants" suggests a purely causal account of present wants, whereas it has already been argued in Section 1 that there must be reasons for all wants, deriving from the evaluations and intentions of the agent and from his beliefs concerning the desirability of that which is wanted. Nevertheless Gauthier rightly emphasises the potentially greater immediacy of present wants (deriving, as shown above, from logical as well as psychological factors), and also raises by implication an important query concerning the rationality of the prudential akrasiac's behaviour.

Does the prudential akrasiac's preference for the present and immediate, and his disregard for the future and remote, signify a lack of rationality? Reasons, as Nagel puts it, "represent values which are not time-dependent";[21] they were described in Section 1, E, as reaching beyond purely situational factors which refer to particular persons and events towards generalisations that transcend the particular. "The most obvious and all-pervading feature of reason is surely this transcendence of the this, the here, and the now," claims Peters, "... in prudential reasoning about conduct, when one says 'No' to oneself, there is

a presupposition that, other things being equal, the mere position in time of the satisfaction of a desire is of itself irrelevant."[22] Similarly, Mabbott makes a central feature of reason and rationality the "recognition of time", which involves "putting off a present desire with a promissory note" and "envisaging time-plans as solutions for ... problems and conflicts."[23]

But do these time-connected features of reason mean that the prudential akrasiac, with his preoccupation with the immediate, is simply behaving irrationally? If so, it seems that prudential akrasia may turn out to be not a case of akrasia at all, for irrationality denotes defective reasoning, which was ruled out as a possible explanation of akrasia in Chapter IV, as it ran counter to the ability criterion in causing the agent to be unable to decide to act otherwise.

To dispose of prudential akrasia in this way, however, is arbitrary and, on further consideration, unjustified. The prudential akrasiac is guilty of intellectual dishonesty but not of irrationality. He adopts that course of action which he has reasons for seeing at the time as most desirable and thus for wanting most, though he does not openly spell-out those reasons. His behaviour may be adjudged to be perverse or ill-advised, but it is explicable, consistent and rational in so far as it will effect what he most wants at that time to effect. Irrational behaviour on the other hand involves the conscious adoption of inappropriate means to achieve a desired end - for example, putting on a fur coat in order to keep cool in a heat wave. "An irrational belief," as Peters puts it, "is one that is held wittingly in the face of conclusive evidence against it or one that is held with conviction

when it is extremely problematical whether anything could count as evidence against it."[24] The prudential akrasiac's behaviour is not of this sort; the akrasiac smoker does not take another cigarette in the belief that it will improve his future health, and the schoolboy does not resort to the crib in the belief that it will improve his future skill in translation. In both cases the course of action adopted is seen in itself as more desirable at the time than the future possibility, and not as a means of achieving that possibility. It is not irrational to have a cigarette when what one really wants most of all at that moment is to soothe one's nerves, despite one's beliefs about the long-term effects of smoking; what would be irrational would be to have a cigarette in order to improve one's health, knowing that all the evidence suggests that the reverse will happen.

A central feature, then, of the prudential akrasiac's behaviour in doing x rather than y is that x is seen as more desirable by reason of its immediacy, and y as less desirable by reason of its remoteness. Is this immediacy factor applicable also to cases of moral akrasia? Kenny seems to argue that it is, by giving an overall account of "the will" as "the faculty for giving effect in one's life to long-term projects and stable policies." Thus, "the man of strong will is the man who can prevent the short-term wants from interfering with the execution of the long-term volitions."[25] In addition, there is some empirical evidence (which will be referred to again in Chapter VI) to suggest that there exists a connection between being able to resist temptation and being able to delay the gratification of one's desires and impulses.[26]

But is it safe to conclude that temporal immediacy is

a necessary, explanatory feature of all cases of moral akrasia, as it seems to be in prudential cases? Some types of moral conflict and of moral akrasia (notably the "putting off the evil hour" variety) can be portrayed as a weighing of present against future considerations. If I believe that I ought to be the one to break some bad news to a friend, yet keep putting it off so that the task eventually falls to someone less suitable, I am seeing it as more desirable that I should avoid immediate embarrassment and unpleasantness than that my friend should suffer even greater distress later on. Such cases, however, seem to be the exception rather than the rule, as many instances of moral conflict and moral akrasia do not fit this temporal pattern. This is because the justificatory reasons accepted by the akrasiac as supporting his "ought"-judgment do not necessarily refer to future as opposed to present considerations. The schoolboy, for example, in using the crib _is_ cheating and _is_ taking an unfair advantage; the principles of fairness and honesty do not apply to some _future_ state of affairs, but form part of the _present_ considerations generated by the immediate situation.

Temporal immediacy then is not a necessary feature of the "countervailing factors" in moral akrasia as it is in prudential akrasia. Nor is geographical immediacy, though again there are some interesting moral instances where this feature is evident. Milgram's experimental work on obedience to authority, for example, in which subjects are told to carry out a series of acts which come increasingly into conflict with their conscience, in that they are instructed by the experimenter apparently to inflict severe electrical shocks upon "victims" who fail (deliberately) to perform learning tasks correctly, clearly

illustrates the importance of geographically immediate factors in certain types of moral dilemma.[27] (Subjects who obeyed the experimenter though believing that they ought not to inflict the shocks are clearly guilty of moral akrasia, and following the account developed in this chapter their behaviour can be interpreted as their seeing it as more desirable to gain the experimenter's approval than to prevent the "victim's" sufferings.) Some of Milgram's experiments showed that the closer the contact between subject and victim, and the greater the isolation of subject from experimenter, the more likely was the subject to disobey his instructions (and so to do what he believed he ought to do). Thus, the countervailing factors, represented by the influence and authority of the experimenter, carried weight with the subject in proportion to their relative geographical immediacy compared with that of the justificatory reasons for acting otherwise, represented by the victim's sufferings.

Both empirical evidence and commonsense, then, suggest that it may well be easier to feel concern for the interests of another person when that person is geographically immediate, or as Hume puts it, "We sympathise more with persons contiguous to us, than with persons remote from us ..."[28] Clearly not all moral dilemmas will fall into this "geographical" category, but it is significant that the immediacy factor, in both a temporal and a geographical sense, operates in at least some cases of moral akrasia.

But does it also have any more general and logically necessary connections with moral cases? That it does has already been suggested by various references in this section to the effect

that moral conflicts involve a clash between more immediate and more remote considerations, though not in a strictly temporal or geographical sense necessarily. These references will be briefly reviewed in turn.

(a) Moral principles have been described as possessing a theoretical, generalised, "cool-hour" quality which enables them to be expressed only in decisions that ... rather than in decisions to ... Justificatory reasons, being dependent upon moral principles, must therefore lack the immediacy, specificity and first-handedness of countervailing factors arising from the agent's situational wants and motives.

(b) In cases of moral akrasia the conflict is typically between self-interest and the interests of others. The moral akrasiac is motivated by considerations of his own welfare and wants rather than those of others. As with the prudential akrasiac, this can be viewed as a problem of identification: just as the prudential akrasiac finds it difficult to identify with a future self because of its remoteness from his present self, so does the moral akrasiac find it difficult to identify with the interests of others because they lack the first-hand immediacy of his own interests. To identify with the interests of others requires an act of imaginative insight and a focussing of attention away from the immediacy of one's own wants. The moral akrasiac's failure, then, to consider the interests of others as of equal motivational importance to his own can be attributed to a favouring of immediate over remote considerations.

(c) The moral akrasiac fails to make explicit reference in his overall judgment of the situation to those factors which are <u>in fact</u> weighing most heavily with him <u>at the time of his</u>

decision or action. He also fails at the moment of acting or deciding to act (or immediately prior to it) to concentrate sufficiently upon the moral interpretation, or to present it to himself attractively enough. The moral akrasiac's response results from his view of the situation as it appears to him at the time of his decision or action, and that situational response may well be at odds with what his view of the situation would be from the standpoint of a detached observer. The situational nature of his decision and/or action underlines the immediacy of the countervailing factors which at that time eclipse the more remote moral considerations.

The immediacy factor then is applicable in these respects to moral as well as to prudential akrasia, and in addition can be easily shown to be equally applicable to cases where "practical oughts" are not translated into action. This is because the reasons supporting a "practical ought" refer to a future state of affairs, the desirability of which cannot be experienced until action is taken now in the face of possible counter-inclinations. If I believe that I ought to keep my eye on the ball and to practise hard to acquire this technique, the justification is that these activities will be instrumental in helping me to hit the ball better and so improve my game. But as in cases of prudential akrasia, future, more remote considerations (e.g. I want to become a better golfer) can conflict with present, more immediate ones (e.g. I do not want to have to discipline myself by putting in hours of tedious practice), and can weigh less heavily because of their relative remoteness.

A central feature of akrasia, in its various forms,

has therefore been shown to be the greater weight placed by the agent upon immediate considerations than upon more remote ones, though the precise interpretation of "immediate" and "remote" will vary in different cases.

Conclusion

This section has attempted to throw light upon the problem of akrasia by viewing it as a special case of "doing x rather than y". The formal account of "doing x rather than y", developed in Section 1, was first applied to the two elements that constitute akrasia - "sincerely believing that one ought to do y" and "doing x". It was argued that the akrasiac basically wants to do x rather than y, i.e. the justificatory reasons supporting y are in some way outweighed by his wants and motives which supply the explanatory reasons why he does x.

This formal account was then supplemented by an examination of three central features of the akrasiac's behaviour, labelled the dishonesty factor, the language factor and the immediacy factor. Taken together these offer a general explanatory framework for the various forms of akrasia, and also carry some important implications for moral education which will be explored in the following chapter.

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CHAPTER VI - IMPLICATIONS FOR MORAL EDUCATION

The previous four chapters have examined various philosophical problems surrounding akrasia, notably its logical possibility, its characterisation and its explanation. It is now time to return to some of the issues raised in the opening chapter to discover what light this philosophical investigation has thrown upon the relationship between children's moral judgments and actions and upon the part which moral education might play in strengthening that relationship in practice. It is also time to reconsider Mortimore's exploratory questions and to suggest some answers to them:

> "... how would (various) ways of conceiving of cases of weakness of will affect our ways of teaching morality? Are our current ways of teaching strength of will misguided, or do they just need to be redescribed?"[1]

This final chapter will in the main follow the direction indicated by Mortimore's questions. The overall strategy will be to consider in Section 1 the possible relevance and application of the foregoing analysis to the moral behaviour of children; in Section 2, the extent to which particular conceptions of morality and of akrasia dictate particular methods of moral education in general and of combatting akrasia in particular; in Section 3, a typology of "ways of teaching morality" with special reference to their anti-akrasiac value; and finally in Section 4, a synthesis of the most promising aspects of these methods with some implications of the three "factors" of akrasia discussed in Chapter V, Section 2, B. As moral education is the focal point of this chapter, it will be for the most part moral akrasia (rather than the other varieties described earlier) which will be considered in the following sections.

1. Can children be akrasiac?

At first sight it might seem that there is no difficulty in relating the foregoing analysis to the behaviour of children. Why should not the account of akrasia so far developed be applied to the judgments and actions of children and adults alike? Why should not children as well as adults fail to do what they believe they ought to do?

Problems arise, however, when the criteria for akrasia are re-examined. Akrasia, it was argued in Chapter IV, Section 1, B, involves a person doing x, or deciding to do x, while at the same time sincerely believing that he ought not to do x, though being able not to do x and to decide not to do x (or the parallel negative formulation). Both an ability requirement and an inconsistency requirement have to be met before a case of akrasia can be said to have occurred, and it might be argued that the judgments and actions of children can meet neither.

A. Ability Criterion

Doubts centre here around whether children, as opposed to adults, are able in general to act or decide to act other than as they actually do. Given the forms of reasoning and levels of intellectual activity which characterise children's behaviour, perhaps that behaviour should be thought of as "determined" and children as "unable to act otherwise".

Any such sweeping attempt to classify the behaviour of children as "determined" in a way in which adult behaviour is not, however, invites some obvious objections. Who, for example, is

to count as being a "child"? The new-born baby may be in some sense unable to act or decide to act otherwise when he emits his first cry, but it is less clear whether the one-year old who cries to gain attention falls into the same category. And if there are these difficulties over the classification even of babies' behaviour, how is a dividing line to be drawn between "children", who are unable to act otherwise, and "adults", who are? A child does not wake up on his tenth or thirteenth or sixteenth birthday suddenly able to satisfy the ability criterion.

Clearly there are some children who, because of mental or physical handicap, are at times unable to act other than they do, but their behaviour cannot be classified differently from that of similarly handicapped adults because they are "children". As far as the majority of children are concerned, a study of their development suggests a gradual shift away from "causal" towards more freely chosen behaviour, rather than a specifiable period of universal causation followed by one of universal freedom. As was claimed in Chapter IV, Section 1, B, when "distinction arguments against actualism" were presented, a large intermediate area exists where the degree and nature of causal influence is uncertain, but the very existence of this twilight zone weakens rather than strengthens the blanket claim that the behaviour of "children" is determined in a way that that of "adults" is not. In so far, then, as it appears legitimate to regard much of human behaviour in general as satisfying the ability criterion (in the absence of convincing arguments to the contrary from the actualists), so does it appear equally legitimate to count much of children's behaviour as falling within the broader category and

thereby also satisfying the ability criterion - though it may well be that a greater proportion of children's behaviour, especially very young children's, is causally determined.

B. Inconsistency Criterion

The applicability of the inconsistency criterion to children's behaviour creates more subtle and serious difficulties. The akrasiac sincerely believes that he ought to do that which he in fact does not do, but can a child properly be said to believe sincerely that he ought to do x in a sense which satisfies the inconsistency requirement?

To summarise the definitional points made in Chapters III and IV, "sincerely believing that one ought ..." implies the following:-

(i) recognising the backing of justificatory reasons.

(ii) uncertainty of outcome.

(iii) the likely presence of countervailing factors.

(iv) recognising an obligation which would lead to the appropriate action in the absence of these counter-vailing factors.

(v) the occurrence of regret, remorse, uneasiness, or some other such "behavioural or non-behavioural consideration", if the "ought" is not acted upon.

These conditions can clearly be satisfied in some instances of children's behaviour, for the example of the school-boy and his Latin crib, which has already been extensively dis-cussed, was chosen as a paradigm case to illustrate the necessary

features of akrasia and of "ought"-judgments. Yet the fact that this example described the behaviour of an intelligent teenager may induce the suspicion that younger children at lower stages of intellectual development may neither qualify as being able to "believe sincerely that they ought to do x", nor consequently count as possible akrasiacs.

The main obstacles appear to lie in conditions (i) and (iv) above. Examples can easily be given of the uncertain outcome of children's "ought"-judgments (ii), of countervailing factors weighing against those judgments (iii), and of resultant feelings of regret, remorse, etc. (v). But can many children, especially young children, be said to hold beliefs which have the backing of justificatory reasons and imply the recognition of an obligation which would lead to the appropriate action, ceteris paribus?

Condition (i) - the backing of justificatory reasons

Acknowledging the backing of justificatory reasons need not be an intellectually sophisticated exercise. The requirement is not that the agent should be able to present an elaborately argued philosophical case for a particular course of action, but that he should recognise that certain considerations constitute "good" reasons of some sort for that course of action, which derive from a more general principle of some sort which he accepts. The reasons and principles do not have to be "moral" to be justificatory in this sense; "practical" oughts will be justified by instrumental, pragmatic reasons (see Chapter III), and in cases of prudential akrasia the reasons and principles will refer to the agent's own self-interest.

A child, then, has only to be able to recognise that certain factors in a situation constitute "good" reasons (of some sort) for a particular course of action, deriving from a more general principle (of some sort) which he accepts, for the first condition to be satisfied. Although there is some empirical evidence to suggest that the giving of reasons to young children has little effect upon their behaviour,[2] it would be arbitrary to assume that young children are totally unable to work out or recognise, albeit in an embryonic way, that certain factors constitute "good" reasons for doing x rather than y. Indeed both logic and commonsense suggest that the concept of "(good) reasons" is gradually built up by young children alongside the concepts of "cause" and "effect", and that these notions must be basic elements in the development of human thinking from its earliest stages.

The "good reasons" and the "general principles" which the child accepts, therefore, do not need to be of a particularly abstract or exalted kind. Kohlberg, whose work will be referred to at several points in this chapter, has attempted to describe sequential stages of moral development, each of which can be characterised by a particular type of reason or principle which the subject sees as "justifying moral action". Six levels of reason were isolated, "each congruent with one of the developmental types ... as follows:

1. Punishment by another.
2. Manipulation of goods, rewards by another.
3. Disapproval by others.
4. Censure by legitimate authorities, followed by guilt feelings.

5. Community respect and disrespect.

6. Self-condemnation."[3]

There is clearly a considerable overlap between the justificatory and motivational aspects of these (and, as was suggested in Chapter III, of all such) reasons, but is there a distinctively justificatory element in them which can be detected even at Level 1? Some disagreement exists among psychologists over this aspect of children's moral reasoning. Piaget, for example, holds that the young child relies upon external adult sanctions, rules and commands to define and justify what is right and wrong,[4] while Kohlberg argues that children's judgments at the lowest levels reveal only a motivational "realistic-hedonistic desire to avoid punishment"[5] and a consequent prediction of what action is most likely to achieve this. Kohlberg, however, appears confused over the distinction between motivation and justification (speaking, for example, of "the 'motivational' aspect of morality (as) defined by the motive mentioned by the subject in justifying moral action"),[6] and Piaget's account of the young child's moral judgments, not as mere predictions of likely rewards and punishments, but as rudimentary forms of justification based on the authoritative pronouncements and actions of adults, draws a more convincing picture of how the notion of "justification" (and consequently of "ought", as distinct from "should") originates and develops in children.

It is reasonable to suppose, then, that even at Kohlberg's lower stages the young child does not merely believe that he should do x because he will avoid punishment or gain reward that way, but that he ought to do x because the prospect of punishment

or reward, as the embodiment of adult authority, means that it is wrong not to do x. The "heteronomous" child who believes that he ought not to play in muddy puddles "because Mummy says so" is not just predicting disapproval or punishment if he does play in muddy puddles, but acknowledging justificatory reasons and principles of a rudimentary kind for behaving in a particular way; even he, then, can be said to satisfy minimally the first condition of "sincerely believing that he ought to do x."

Condition (iv) - recognising an obligation which would lead to the appropriate action in the absence of countervailing factors

In considering whether children can also satisfy this condition, which is closely linked to the previous one, it is necessary to distinguish between "recognising an obligation" in the sense of feeling it to impinge upon oneself and to require action, and "knowing the rules" in the sense of being aware that certain things are forbidden as a matter of fact. Here's similar distinction between using "ought" as a "value judgment", and using it as a "statement of sociological fact"[7] is apposite here, for children no doubt often use "ought" in the latter, descriptive sense: "we ought not to talk during Assembly" may well mean in many cases "we are not expected (or allowed) to talk during Assembly, and there is in fact a rule forbidding it". The failure to translate descriptive "ought"-judgments of this kind into action does not constitute a case of akrasia, as was argued in Chapter IV.

But why should children be thought to use "ought" always, or even normally, in this descriptive way? In the example just given, a child would be more likely to say, "We are not supposed

to talk during Assembly", thus indicating that he was descriptively recounting a rule or social expectation rather than acknowledging the prescriptive authority of an obligation as in, "We ought to own up and save the rest of the class from being kept in". In the latter case the children involved could certainly qualify as "sincerely believing that they ought to own up", either if they did own up as a result of their belief (backed by justificatory reasons of some sort) or if they failed to own up as a result of countervailing factors (e.g. fear of punishment) but then felt guilty or uneasy or showed embarrassment, etc.

The apparent difficulties, then, involved in trying to apply conditions (i) and (iv) to children's judgments and behaviour are not as serious as they might seem. Maturity of intellectual or moral reasoning is not required in order to qualify as "sincerely believing that one ought ..." The intelligent teenager with his dilemma of the Latin crib will certainly qualify, but so also will the younger child in the example just described, who believes that he ought to own up to a classroom offence. A third and more extreme example could encompass the behaviour even of the pre-school child who knows that by climbing on to a stool in the larder he can reach a tin of his favourite sweets, but also knows from previous experience that he may fall and hurt himself if he tries and that his mother has forbidden him to climb on the stool.

But can such a child properly be said to "believe sincerely that he ought ..."? Or does he merely see the action as forbidden and likely to result in punishment if detected? It is not unreasonable to see in some such cases at least a rudimentary

awareness of justificatory reasons, as suggested in Piaget's interpretation. The child could thus be said to believe sincerely that he ought not to climb on to the stool, if he can acknowledge that there are reasons why he ought not to do so, based partly upon considerations of his own safety and partly upon the authoritative validity which he sees his mother's pronouncement possessing, not merely as a motivational sanction but as a justificatory fiat. Such a child might well believe that he ought not to climb on to the stool because his mother says so (and what mother says is right), rather than that he should refrain from climbing on to the stool in order to avoid punishment. This embryonic form of justificatory reason is likely to be associated with the pronouncements of an adult for whom the child feels some respect, admiration or trust. The justificatory reasons, then, constitute an obligation which he feels to weigh upon him and which he will act upon, other things being equal; but other things may not be equal, for strong countervailing factors may exist in the shape of a tempting sweet tin almost within his reach, while his mother, busy in the next room, represents a less immediate consideration. The outcome of this child's sincerely held "ought"-belief is thus highly uncertain, creating a potentially akrasiac situation.

"Sincerely believing that one ought ..." can therefore be used to describe a wide range of children's judgments. Some children, like some adults, will be intellectually incapable of satisfying the suggested criteria, and the further problem has been mentioned of deciding when and how young children grasp the notion of a "justifying" reason why one ought ..., as distinct

from a "motivating" reason why one should ... However, while it may not be possible to say of certain children or groups of children that they "sincerely believe that they ought ...", the argument in this section has suggested that most children, at least of school age, can properly be said to be capable of sincerely holding an "ought"-belief. Akrasia in consequence becomes a problem for children as well as for adults - a problem which moral education has to consider.

2. How are conceptions of moral education related to conceptions of akrasia?

"'Moral Education' is a name for nothing clear," declares Wilson.[8] Certainly the term is used to describe a wide variety of activities, intentions and processes, which have been the subject of much recent debate. Is moral education, for instance, concerned with teaching the form of moral reasoning or the content of particular codes and principles? Should it be seen as a distinct area of the school curriculum, or as a more incidental element in the teaching of more traditional school subjects, or as a reflection of the overall ethos of a school as characterised by its interpersonal relationships and organisational structure? Is moral education indeed the concern of the school at all?[9]

It is not intended to consider questions of this generalised kind in this chapter, though some of the issues involved will be discussed in so far as they relate to akrasia. For the purposes of this chapter "moral education" will be taken to refer to any activity or process which is implicitly or explicitly directed towards influencing young people's moral

thinking, beliefs and behaviour; "moral education" is therefore, by this definition, not limited to what goes on in schools, and consequently the term "teacher", as used throughout this chapter, is not to be equated necessarily with "schoolteacher".

Moral education is not wholly or even mainly concerned with the problem of akrasia. It has other equally important functions, as Wilson's list of "moral components" suggests,[10] and illustrations were given in Chapter I of how some accounts of moral education place little or no emphasis upon the possible difficulties of translating moral beliefs and judgments into action. However, unless the function of moral education is held to be wholly "judgmental" or "cognitive", or unless an extreme version of the "conformist" tradition of morality is adopted, a possible gap between judgment and action must be admitted of which moral education must take account.

One result of the disagreement over the meaning and function of moral education has been a wide diversity of methods proposed and used for the teaching or transmitting of morality. A typology of methods will be presented in Section 3, but first it needs to be demonstrated how those accounts of morality and moral education which (at least implicitly) recognise akrasia as a possible problem can derive their suggested practical methods of tackling the problem only from a particular theoretical interpretation and explanation of akrasia. To illustrate this relationship, five approaches to moral education will be briefly described and linked to certain of the explanations of akrasia which were discussed in Chapter IV. No attempt will be made at this point to evaluate either the validity of the explanations (which have

already been scrutinised in Chapter IV) or the appropriateness of the resulting methodologies (which will be examined in Sections 3 and 4).

A. The "Repressive" Approach

One traditional approach to moral education, often associated with strongly held religious views, has been to attempt to quell or repress the child's "nature", which is seen as essentially wayward and rebellious. An innate predisposition to wickedness ensures that the child can do no right until that predisposition is countered in some way and the child "reformed".

This "repressive" approach to moral education derives from a belief in the fundamentally evil nature of man (until redeemed by a relationship with God), and in the "competitive" nature of morality, as described in Chapter II; both of these elements are to be found in the already quoted passage from Paul on man's "inability" to do what is good.[11] The value of the Pauline account as an explanation of akrasia was questioned in Chapter IV, but whatever its inadequacies it has influenced for centuries men's views on the moral upbringing of children.

The methods associated with this approach seem to be suggested by the models of exorcism or disease control. The evil element within children's nature which prevents them from behaving as they ought has to be removed or stamped out in some way, e.g.

(i) by preaching and verbal exhortation, designed to direct children towards the redeeming influence of God,

(ii) by telling stories of children who disregarded such preaching, and consequently received their deserts in

this world or the next,

(iii) by the use of rewards and punishments to reinforce (i) and (ii). Physical punishment has often been considered to be particularly effective, probably because of the models mentioned above; if the evil element is seen in the same light as a demon to be exorcised or a disease to be eradicated, one obvious remedy will be to drive or beat out the badness.[12]

It might be objected that these methods are not intended to combat akrasia, for if the child is thought to be basically evil, how can he hold moral beliefs that he ought to do y, even if he in fact fails to do y? This objection recalls the problem mentioned in connection with the Pauline account of akrasia in Chapter IV: how can man, being essentially wicked, summon up the goodness initially to invoke God's redeeming aid? However, even if the child's nature is seen as being in some sense radically wicked, reform and improvement must presumably be thought to be possible if preaching, exhorting and punishing are considered to have any point. Once the reformative process has (somewhat inexplicably) commenced, therefore, there will be many occasions when the child's developing moral scruples conflict with the inclinations of his original nature and when akrasia will consequently rear its head. The methods associated with the "repressive" approach to moral education, then, owe their origin and justification to a particular view of the nature of man and of morality, and also to a particular explanation of akrasia.

B. The "Good Habit" Approach

A second approach to moral education, also of a traditional nature but lacking the religious overtones of the "repressive" approach, has centred around the notion of "character-training" and the formation of "good habits", thus concentrating upon the behavioural rather than the judgmental aspects of morality. According to this approach, practice makes perfect in the learning of moral behaviour just as it does in the learning of skills - or, in Aristotle's words, "We become just by performing just actions."[13] The aim then is to build up a pattern of behaviour which exhibits consistency and even predictability through the practising of certain types of action which become habitual and thereby definitive of the individual's "character".

Several alternative views of moral action and of akrasia may lie behind this approach to moral education. A common feature, however, is that some element in the agent's psychological make-up is thought to be too weak or ill-developed to ensure that moral beliefs and principles are always acted upon; it is accordingly part of the function of moral education to strengthen this element. The defective component may be variously conceived and described - either as "will" or as "character" or as "conscience" - and differences of methodology will arise from differences of classification.

Defects of "will" are usually thought to be best remedied by a training programme of habituation resulting in more or less automatic responses to those situations in which a "weak-willed" person would be most likely to succumb to temptation. A child's "will" might thus be strengthened if he is trained, for example,

to hand the cakes round to visitors at teatime before taking one himself and so becomes so habituated to this routine that the instinctive urge to grab the best one for himself presents less and less of a temptation to him. Rewards and punishments will probably be used to reinforce the desired behaviour.

Defects of "character" may be tackled in similar ways, but by less direct forms of training and conditioning. There is an implication that the individual is more aware of and in control of the state of his "character" than of his "will" and should be encouraged to feel that he is the main agent responsible for its "development". Methods typically associated with "character-training" consist in placing the learner in situations which demand and test qualities like determination, endurance, consistency and reliability. Games, sports and other physical activities (such as mountaineering or camping) have been held to be particularly valuable in this respect, on the assumption (to be examined in Section 3) that whatever is developed in these activities is transferable to the learner's moral life; so that, for example, learning to play a straight bat on the cricket field will help to produce a person who is morally "straight" and unflinching in situations which test honesty and reliability.

Defects of "conscience" seem to call for "will-strengthening" rather than "character-training" methods, for one does not consciously build up one's conscience so much as have it implanted by others. Moral education directed towards the child's conscience, as opposed to his "will", however, will place rather less emphasis upon overt behaviour and rather more upon getting the child to believe and feel that certain actions are right or

wrong, though the basis of these beliefs and feelings will vary according to the degree of self-conscious awareness and rationality with which they are held (cf. the distinction between "rational" and "irrational" conscience drawn in Chapter III.) The aim of this approach will be to establish a form of internalised control within the child which will deter him from acting as he otherwise would, thus removing the necessity for an external authority figure to be constantly present. Methods of producing this internalised control will again include verbal exhortation, praise and blame, reward and punishment, supplemented by the processes of unconscious "identification" and conscious "example-following."

Despite the above differences of emphasis, all three of these "defect-remedying" accounts share a similar, general view of akrasia and its explanation. Each is firmly rooted in the "competitive" tradition of morality, and each portrays on one side of the competitive struggle a potentially defective component which has in some way to be made strong enough to resist the temptation to act immorally. Moral akrasia is therefore assumed to be caused by overriding, non-moral wants and desires, which have to be somehow counterbalanced and indeed outweighed if one is to do what one believes one ought. Morality requires the formation of good habits, which can only become established if the agent comes to want to perform the habitual, "right" actions more than he wants to act otherwise. Habit-formation then produces moral behaviour through the modification of wants, which is in turn achieved by strengthening the defective "will", "character" or "conscience".

This view of morality has direct implications for methods

of moral education. The child must be brought to want to do what he has been trained to do, or what his character leads him to do, or what his conscience tells him to do, more than he will want to contravene these forms of control and incur the consequent punishment, unease or guilt. So the "strong-willed" child, who has been trained to behave in a certain way, will normally want to continue with these habits and so gain the reward of approval, rather than abandon them and suffer disapproval; the child who has developed an honest and reliable "character" will normally prefer to act "in" rather than "out of" that character, for such actions will reflect his general attitudes and dispositions; and the child with a "strong conscience" will normally want to do what he feels is right, rather than earn the rebuke of his internal monitor.

The "good habit" approach to moral education, therefore, like the "repressive" approach, results from a particular view of morality and a particular set of explanations for akrasia. The latter make use of the explanatory concepts of "will", "character" and "conscience", defects in which it is suggested may be remedied by various methods and processes.

C. The "Linguistic" Approach

A third approach to moral education sees morality as essentially a language into which children have to be initiated. Just as children make mistakes in Science and Mathematics because they are not fully conversant with the logic of scientific and mathematical thinking, so can they also make mistakes in morality by ignoring its logical features. Moral education, then, will

consist in teaching the rules by which moral concepts operate and the demands they make upon their users.

The particular problem of akrasia arises, according to this view, when moral concepts like "ought" are misunderstood and misused with respect to their "prescriptive" and "universal" features. Children, because they are still learning to use the language, will be especially prone to these mistakes. A child may, on the one hand, accept the proposition that one ought to share one's toys with other children as a descriptive fact about the world and the beliefs of adults, rather than as a rule which prescribes that he must share his toys if he accepts it; on the other hand, he may interpret the proposition as a convenient, non-universal licence to play with other children's toys without laying himself under any reciprocal obligation.

The methods associated with this approach are largely linguistic, as it is the child's grasp of moral language that is thought to be defective. They will include explicit teaching of how moral concepts work; examples of adults using them correctly; elementary courses in ethics for older children; and commentaries upon actual situations with younger ones. Confirmation that such methods are often used even with young children (though seldom perhaps by teachers or parents fully aware of the above rationale) is provided by the frequency of the response, "How would you like it if that was done to you?" or "How would it be if everyone did that?" given to children who are apparently failing to appreciate moral "universality".

This form of moral education again clearly derives from a particular interpretation of morality and moral language, which in turn suggests a particular explanation of akrasia: that it is,

in Hare's words, a form of "special pleading" which only becomes possible if moral language is used in an "off-colour" way (see Chapter II).

D. The "Cognitive" Approach

Like the "linguistic" approach, this emphasises the judgmental aspects of morality, but is more concerned with teaching a particular form of reasoning and mode of thinking than the conceptual structure of moral language. At least two strands can be distinguished here - the "Aristotelian" and the "developmental".

According to the "Aristotelian" strand, a form of reasoning exists (described and discussed in Chapter IV) which we have to "know" and "use" if we are to act morally; this consists, in brief, of coming to hold general moral principles, of recognising particular instances as falling under them, and of drawing the correct conclusions. Defects of "knowledge", it is claimed, can occur at any of these stages, and so lead to akrasia. As in C, children will be particularly liable to make mistakes because of their lack of acquaintance with and practice in this form of reasoning. They may fail to "actively know and use" principles and rules to which they assent (e.g. by looking upon the principle that one ought to share one's toys with other children less fortunate than oneself descriptively rather than prescriptively, as in C); or fail to realise that Johnny counts as a child less fortunate than oneself; or fail to "put two and two together" and to draw the conclusion that one ought to share one's toys with Johnny. Despite the objections to such "defective

knowledge" explanations of akrasia discussed in Chapter IV, it is possible to conceive of a form of moral education based fairly and squarely upon the practical syllogism.

According to the "developmental" strand of the "cognitive" approach, moral development is but one aspect of intellectual development, and to behave more or less morally is to behave more or less rationally and exhibit more or less intellectual maturity (see Chapter IV). Moral thinking proceeds by way of sequential stages from a state of heteronomy in which controls, sanctions and justifications are externally based to a more autonomous mode of reasoning in which the individual comes to accept rules and principles as "his own". Moral education, on this account, will obviously consist in encouraging children to progress to the highest stage that they are capable of reaching. This will also be regarded as the best defence against akrasia, which is again seen as essentially a defect in the individual's reasoning capacities; indeed some empirical evidence in support of this can be produced (which will be considered in more detail in Section 3), to the effect that the higher the stage of moral reasoning achieved the greater the likelihood that a moral judgment will be acted upon.[14]

Methods of moral education deriving from a "cognitive" view of morality, then, will aim at improving the level of children's thinking about moral questions, but will vary according to one's conception of exactly <u>how</u> moral reasoning develops. At one extreme <u>no</u> direct teaching methods will be thought to be of any use because the child's progression from a lower to a higher stage is held to be dependent upon maturational "readiness" which is in turn determined by his more general cognitive development;

at the other extreme will lie courses in ethics and in logic, designed to illustrate and teach the characteristic features of moral reasoning. In between the two extremes can be located a variety of discussion methods (to be distinguished and examined in Section 3), aimed at stimulating children to talk and think about moral questions, and sometimes supplemented by teaching materials specifically devised for this purpose.[15] An individual rather than a group approach is also suggested by some of the "developmentalists", who recommend that a child at stage x of his moral development should be confronted with arguments, reasons and considerations representative of the stage x + 1, in order to accelerate his progress to the higher stage.[16]

Both strands of the "cognitive" approach to moral education and the methods which they suggest, therefore, again represent a particular, theoretical perspective upon the nature of morality and of moral learning, which in turn implies a particular explanation of akrasia - this time in terms of "defective" knowledge or reasoning.

E. The "Affective" Approach

Finally in this sample survey mention must be made of an approach which sees moral education as a matter of encouraging the right feelings, emotions and attitudes towards others. Again two interpretations of morality and moral learning can be distinguished here. According to the first, morality is essentially concerned with interpersonal relationships and consequently with values such as consideration, concern, caring and sympathy; according to the second, we become moral by conforming to what others expect us to be and would be shocked if we were not, and

because we care about these social expectations and expressions of approval or disapproval.

Both of these interpretations lead to a similar explanation of akrasia (i.e. that the akrasiac lacks "feeling", and simply does not care enough about the welfare or expectations of others), and also to similar conclusions about the aims and methodology of moral education. The main problem in moral education is seen as trying to get children to "identify" with others, to be concerned with their feelings, attitudes and interests, and to accord these as much consideration as their own. Wilson's PHIL component encompasses the main requirements here: understanding that persons share important similarities, believing that they are equally worthy of respect and consideration, actually feeling respect and benevolence, and acting to help others as a result. The child who fails to look after his little sister when crossing a main road, though aware that he ought to take care of her, is therefore failing to "identify" either with his sister's interests in one or more of the above ways, or with the wants and expectations of his parents and teachers, and so is in either case "lacking in feeling".

Methods intended to remedy this defect may include discussion of what constitutes a "person", and of how various groups or individuals with whom children may find it difficult to "identify" (e.g. foreigners, invalids and eighty year-olds) still qualify as "persons" with their own interests and feelings. A further, increasingly popular method is to ensure that children actually encounter such people (e.g. by exchange trips abroad, visiting hospitals and old people in the neighbourhood etc.) in the hope

that relationships will be formed and understanding developed. If "identification" with social expectations is seen as the main aim on the other hand, methods will include clearly indicating what those expectations are, and reinforcing conformity with them by means of a consistent system of praise and blame, approval and disapproval, and bestowing and withholding affection.

The "lack of feeling" explanation of akrasia (see Chapter IV) is thus implied in this view of moral behaviour and moral learning, which again suggests in turn a particular approach to moral education and its methodology.

The five approaches to moral education which have been outlined represent a sample of what Mortimore would call "ways of teaching morality". The main point of this section has been to demonstrate the close logical interrelationships between:-

(i) conceptions of morality

(ii) conceptions of moral education

(iii) explanations of akrasia

and (iv) methods of moral education, particularly designed to combat akrasia.

Several of the explanations of akrasia mentioned in this section have already been rejected as unacceptable because they imply a violation of the criteria for akrasia established in Chapter IV, but these objections have not been repeated here, for even unsatisfactory explanations still illustrate the logical interrelationships under discussion.

This study too has inevitably presented a particular account of what it sees to be some central logical features of

morality - an account which has more in common with the "competitive" than with the "conformist" tradition, and which consequently holds akrasia to be both logically possible and practically problematic. It has also argued for a particular interpretation of akrasia in terms of "wanting more" and has suggested certain explanatory factors, concerned with dishonesty, language and immediacy, which are implied by that interpretation. It now remains, therefore, to consider what implications for the methodology of moral education, with particular reference to the problem of akrasia, can be drawn from this explanatory framework by reason of the logical interrelationships demonstrated above.

This investigation will consist of two stages. The first (Section 3) will attempt a typology of moral education methods, and will examine whether any one method can provide an adequate defence against akrasia. The second (Section 4) will adopt a more constructive and eclectic approach in suggesting some combinations of methods designed to combat akrasia, based upon the explanatory factors described in Chapter V.

3. Is there a particular method of "teaching morality" most likely to combat akrasia?

Three preliminary points need to be emphasised before specific methods can be considered:

(i) "Combatting akrasia" should not be equated with "preventing akrasia". Any form of moral education which is intended to "prevent", "cure" or "eradicate" akrasia in toto has failed to appreciate the necessary "gappiness" between principles and practice (to use Cooper's term), which, as has been argued

throughout this study, is an essential, logical feature of morality. Any method or process which guaranteed to prevent akrasia would also deprive the agent of the freedom to (decide to) act against his principles or beliefs, with the result that his behaviour could not count as moral action at all; to eliminate the possibility of akrasia is to eliminate the very idea of morality and of free, moral action. Methods of moral education, therefore, will be evaluated in this section and the next in respect not of their power to prevent akrasia, but rather of their possible usefulness in helping young people to act upon their moral beliefs. "Combatting akrasia" or "anti-akrasiac" will be used as short-hand descriptions of this function.

(ii) It is, prima facie, highly unlikely that any one method will in itself be adequate in combatting akrasia. The analysis of akrasia developed in the previous chapters has shown it to be a complex phenomenon, the logical features of which suggest that at least three types of explanatory factor are operative. If, then, there is no simple, unitary explanation of akrasia, it is improbable that there will be a simple, unitary method of combatting it.

(iii) The confusion between description and explanation, which was noted in Chapter III in connection with definitions of akrasia, reappears when methods of combatting akrasia are considered. The methods which have already been briefly mentioned in Section 2 can be divided into two categories: those which simply describe what is done (e.g. discussing, rewarding, punishing), and those which embody an implicit explanation of what the method is trying to combat (e.g. training the will, developing character, strengthening the conscience). The latter

group, containing references as they do to the explanatory concepts of "will", "character" and "conscience", tend to prejudge any investigation into the relative usefulness of various methods and contribute little of substance to it; for example, if it is assumed that akrasia is to be defined and explained in terms of "having a weak conscience", it is uninformative to suggest that the way to combat akrasia is to "build up a strong conscience" in children.

The methods considered in this section, therefore, will be defined and discussed as far as possible in descriptive rather than explanatory terms, though the dividing line is not always clear; "talking", for example, would count as wholly descriptive, whereas "rewarding" carries with it some explanatory overtones which distinguish it from a purely behavioural description. It would, however, be pedantic and perhaps logically impossible to try to exclude all explanatory overtones from descriptions of anti-akrasiac methods, and all that will be attempted is as descriptive an account as is possible and practicable.

It will be convenient in presenting the typology to divide the "ways of teaching morality" into two main groups - "verbal" and "practical" - though there will in practice be considerable overlap between the two. Indeed, many combinations of methods are possible, and the doubts expressed above over the existence of a simple, unitary method for combatting akrasia suggest that the most fruitful approach may well lie in one of these combinations. In this section, however, methods will be examined separately in order to gain a clearer picture of their particular strengths and weaknesses, before the advantages of

various combinations are considered.

A. "Verbal" Methods

These will be taken to refer to occasions when adults either talk to children or encourage them to talk among themselves about moral matters, and can be classified into three groups, to be labelled: (i) exhortation and preaching, (ii) rational instruction, (iii) discussion.

(i) Exhortation and Preaching

Adults using these methods with children are aiming to set before them a pattern, model or ideal of behaviour, and to urge them to strive to achieve it. Preaching is directed towards the former objective; it paints a picture of the state of goodness which can be attained by children (in moral or religious terms, or both), and often of the state of badness in which they are at present languishing, or are in danger of languishing. Exhortation is directed towards the latter goal, being designed to stir the listener to improve his moral condition.

The moral content of exhortation and preaching is usually explicit and clear-cut, consisting of rules, precepts, principles and instructions which range in their applicability from the general, "Always show respect to your elders and betters", to the particular, "Don't upset your mother by staying out too late." Explanations and reasons may be added, but the main concern of this method is to convince and convert, rather than to justify. It seeks an emotional response from the listener, and consequently often takes the form of story-telling, which provides

dramatic examples of model behaviour performed by saintly or heroic characters.

As a means of combatting akrasia, this direct presentation of rules and principles would seem to have some value in connection with the language factor. The child is being exposed, through exhortation and preaching, to the prescriptive and persuasive functions of language, which, as was suggested in Chapter V, is one important way in which we come to see things as desirable and valuable, or the reverse. This prescriptivity is obvious in the above imperative examples, containing the further normative concepts of "respect", "elders and betters", "upset" and "too late"; it is less overt in pronouncements like "only children who are spoilt and selfish don't share their sweets", but the descriptive form of such sentences cloaks the intended prescription: "It's right to share your sweets; if you don't, you are spoilt and selfish, which is bad." Exhortation and preaching, then, strongly convey approval and disapproval of various forms of behaviour, which must to some extent influence a child's linguistic framework through which he views the world, and consequently his moral concepts, attitudes and interpretations also. There is in addition some empirical evidence to suggest that the verbalising of rules can help young children to resist temptation; O'Leary, for example, found that by teaching young children a rule which they had to break in order to cheat, and by getting them to say the rule to themselves while performing the task at which they had the opportunity to cheat, the incidence of cheating was greatly reduced.[17]

The weaknesses of exhortation and preaching, however,

as methods of combatting akrasia, outweigh their possible strengths, for the verbal transmission of rules and prescriptions to a largely passive recipient creates several serious problems.

Firstly, even the linguistic justification of the method, which represents its strongest point, has severe limitations, for exposing children to the prescriptive and persuasive functions of language and to expressions of approval and disapproval in this way will not necessarily make them want to follow the prescriptions or be persuaded unless they can "identify" in some way with the prescriber and want to gain his approval. The archetypal conflict, often portrayed in children's stories, between a family or group of children and an unsympathetic, authoritarian step-parent, governess or teacher, demonstrates how "prescriptive exposure" can frequently be insufficient to ensure compliance with what is prescribed, and can even directly provoke non-compliance.

Secondly, and with particular reference to the "honesty factor" discussed in Chapter V, this form of verbalism is likely to produce "ought"-judgments that are incomplete, unexamined, and therefore conducive to self-deception and intellectual dishonesty. A child who, as a result of exhortation and preaching, comes to "learn" and "believe" that he ought to respect his elders and betters will probably have no more than a hazy appreciation of any justificatory reasons backing the "ought" (perhaps only at the punishment-avoidance level), and will certainly not be encouraged to admit or examine his countervailing, non-moral wants in a particular situation of temptation (e.g. when he meets an "elder and better" whom he intensely dislikes and would greatly enjoy being rude to), for the very existence of these wants, if

admitted either to himself or to others, will be taken as an indication of his wickedness and failure to heed the exhortation and preaching. If this child, on the other hand, is rude to an adult whom he dislikes, but explicitly acknowledges only that part of his appraisal of the situation represented by the "ought", then he is encouraging both in himself and in other judges the belief that his behaviour is to be described and explained as "weak-willed". To balance one's openly acknowledged wants and motives against the demands of justificatory reasons may not affect one's ultimate decision and action (though it is possible that it may), but it will at least lead to a more complete and honest appraisal of the situation, a result which exhortation and preaching seem unlikely to achieve.

Thirdly, and perhaps most seriously, the verbal transmission of rules and prescriptions is necessarily "non-immediate" in several of the senses described in Chapter V. Exhortation and preaching can only pronounce that certain things are right or wrong, and ought to be done or avoided. They can, strictly speaking, only be "propositional", however much insistence is laid upon the desirability of acting in accordance with the propositions, and it has also been argued that moral principles are similarly "propositional", in that their acceptance is expressed in decisions or resolves that ... rather than in decisions or resolves to ... The learning of rules and principles from exposure to exhortation and preaching will therefore also be "propositional". A child may learn that he ought to respect his elders and betters by being told that he ought to do so and by coming to believe that he ought to do so (and perhaps resolving

that he ought to do so), but verbalism alone cannot claim to bridge the gap between judgment and action, for it cannot claim that it has thereby taught the child to respect his elders and betters or ensured that the child has learnt to do so.

Further weight is added to this objection when the question of temporal immediacy is considered. In Chapter V it was argued that although some cases of moral conflict and moral akrasia can be portrayed as a weighing of present against future considerations, many do not fit this temporal pattern, because the justificatory reasons accepted by the akrasiac do not necessarily refer to future as distinct from present factors. However, when rules and principles are taught and learnt by means of exhortation and preaching, the present/future distinction has much greater relevance, for the whole aim and point of these methods is that the verbal lessons learnt now should be applied to situations encountered in the future; so that the child who today is told that he ought to respect his elders and betters will tomorrow decide to be polite to an elderly visitor. But there is of course no guarantee, or even probability, that a rule which is verbally transmitted today will weigh more heavily than will the immediacy of possibly countervailing wants and motives tomorrow when a judgment and decision will be made in the light of those situational factors which appear most influential at that time.

Other aspects of "non-immediacy" are revealed in the story-telling method of exhortation and preaching, referred to above. Any example of model behaviour presented in the story must be non-immediate in the obvious sense of referring to a situation in which the listener is not personally involved. The problems surrounding this approach will be considered in some

detail in subsection (iii) below, in connection with discussion methods using hypothetical moral situations, and at this point it will suffice to note the following difficulties which relate more directly to exhortation and preaching:

(a) The child to whom the story is told may well feel that the character and situation described bear no relationship to his own life and problems. The predicaments and challenges which immortalise saints and heroes are not commonly encountered by children (or even adults). Deeds of self-sacrifice in Antarctic blizzards or of devotion to duty in Crimean hospitals may make for dramatic stories, but opportunities to "follow" such examples at all faithfully are so limited that children may fail to see these stories as in any way prescriptively applicable to themselves.

(b) It is also arguable whether such moral examples of saintliness and heroism, which go far beyond the normal requirements of moral duty, are even logically prescriptive or universalisable. As Urmson maintains, although the agent may see a saintly or heroic act as his duty, he cannot logically be called upon by another to perform it, or be reproached by another for failing to perform it, or expect anyone else to perform it.[18] In an example strongly reminiscent of the educational, "saints and heroes" approach, he argues:

> "It has no doubt often been the case that a person who has gone off to distant parts to nurse lepers has thereby done a deed of great moral worth. But such an action is not merely too far beyond average human capacity to be regarded as a duty ...; it would be quite ridiculous for everyone, however circumstanced, to be expected to go off and nurse lepers."[19]

(c) If the preacher tries to counter the above objections

by claiming that he is recommending the rule or principle exemplified in the story rather than the exemplary behaviour itself, he is raising further problems of transferability. The child on this interpretation will have to grasp firstly that the deed in the story does exemplify some abstract principle, and secondly that that same principle has application to the child's own, and totally different, experiences. But why should it be thought that this roundabout method is the best way to teach children to act upon their principles? The actions of a child picking up someone else's litter in the playground and of Oates walking out of his tent to die can both no doubt be subsumed under the general principle of altruism, but this logical connection provides no grounds for assuming that the latter behaviour can be encouraged by appealing to the former.

Exhortation and preaching, therefore, have some contribution to make towards the combatting of akrasia with regard to the language factor, but reveal serious weaknesses in connection with the honesty and immediacy factors. Some of these weaknesses are to be found not only in exhortation and preaching but in other verbal methods of moral education also, and will thus be mentioned only briefly when these other methods are examined.

(ii) Rational Instruction

The second verbal method will be labelled, somewhat arbitrarily, "rational instruction". It can be distinguished from exhortation and preaching in at least three ways. Firstly, it will be less dogmatic, and will encourage and take serious notice of children's questions, comments and objections, rather

than attempt to impose upon them an inviolate set of rules and prescriptions. Secondly and consequently, it will place more importance upon explanation and justification. (Both of these points reflect Scheffler's analysis of "teaching" as an essentially rational activity.)[20] And thirdly, in trying to develop rational appraisals of moral questions rather than to provide ready-made, authoritative answers to them, it will concentrate as much upon the form as upon the content of morality.

The last point provides the most clear-cut differentia between "rational instruction" and "exhortation and preaching", for some examples of the latter need not rule out a measure of "feed-back" from the children and of rational explanation from the teacher. Exhortation and preaching are, however, inescapably "content-bound", in that they present an unequivocal account of what constitutes model, moral behaviour. Rational instruction, on the other hand, though it may well include the drawing of specific conclusions from evidence examined and discussed, to the effect that certain actions are more justifiable and of greater moral value than others, is also directed towards developing children's understanding of <u>how</u> moral judgments are made and their skill in making them.

Three possible approaches to teaching the form of moral reasoning have already been mentioned elsewhere in this study. Children could be taught by means of rational instruction the way in which moral concepts "work" and are to be used (i.e. their logical properties, relationships and implications), as Hare claims could be done with the properties of "prescriptivity" and "universality".[21] Or they could be taught the way in which moral

conclusions may be drawn from premises, as in Aristotle's practical syllogism.[22] Or they could be taught what constitutes a "morally educated person", or a "moral reason", as suggested by Wilson's "components".[23] In each case, teaching <u>what</u> the form of moral reasoning is thought to be would need to be supplemented by teaching <u>how</u> to employ it (e.g. in the discussion of examples).

The main strength of any of these methods as a means of combatting akrasia lies in their emphasis upon the compelling validity of justificatory reasons and logical requirements. If akrasia is to be partly explained by the lack of motivational pressure exerted by justificatory reasons, any attempt to demonstrate that in forming moral judgments there is a right and a wrong way of using concepts, of adducing reasons, of framing arguments, and of drawing conclusions may help children to feel the logical force of justificatory reasons more strongly. If a child appreciates that there are procedures and skills for deciding what ought morally to be done, which he can to some extent either "get right" or "get wrong", just as there are mathematical procedures and skills for solving mathematical problems which he can "get right" or "get wrong", he will <u>want</u> to get the moral reasoning right rather than wrong, other things being equal; or in other words he will come to see that to accept reasons as justificatory is, in part at least, to acknowledge that there are logical rules of procedure operative in the moral as in other spheres of reasoning.

Rational instruction, however, as an anti-akrasiac method, suffers from several of the same disadvantages as did exhortation and preaching, notably its failure to remove the

problem of motivation and its necessarily propositional nature.

As far as motivation is concerned, describing the form of moral reasoning to children (whatever that form may be) does not ensure that children will want to adopt it. There may be a greater likelihood that, other things being equal, a child will want to "get it right" when he knows what counts as "getting it right", but, as has been frequently emphasised, other things are not equal in situations of potential akrasia because of the particular influence of countervailing factors. Just as a child may fail to use mathematical rules correctly to solve a mathematical problem, although being well aware of them, because he is lazy or cannot be bothered, or allows himself to be distracted, or dislikes Maths. and the Maths. teacher, or thinks that he has better things to do with his time, so might a child fail to employ for similar reasons the procedures of moral reasoning of which he is well aware, when faced with a moral problem, and so not expose himself to the pressure of justificatory and logical considerations. Alternatively, he may choose not to apply what he has been taught about moral reasoning, because he perceives, perhaps hazily, that the conclusion to which his reasoning is likely to lead will be distasteful (e.g. that he ought to see his younger sister safely home from school rather than go into town with the rest of his gang), with the result that he commits intellectual akrasia as described in Chapter IV and so avoids embarking upon the reasoning process in any thorough-going way. Furthermore, the motivational problem does not only apply to cases where the agent does not want to exercise the skill which he has been taught; the boy in the above example might take the trouble of reasoning to a conclusion

but still decide that he wants to go with his friends rather than do what his moral conclusion indicates. Instructing children in the form of moral reasoning, therefore, fails to overcome the motivational problem of akrasia, whether or not the reasoning is actually employed by the child.

As far as its propositional nature is concerned, rational instruction is again open to similar objections to those brought against exhortation and preaching. Whether children are taught by rational instruction that moral judgments are prescriptive and universal, or that conclusions can be drawn from premises, or that being morally educated implies certain attitudes and skills, successful teaching in these areas can only ensure that children learn and know <u>that</u> these things are so; the logical gap must remain between learning propositions and acting upon them. In defence of verbal instruction it might be argued that it is concerned not so much with propositions as with skills, and that it is best characterised as teaching how to ... rather than teaching that ... This move still fails to bridge the logical gap, however, for teaching how to ... is by no means equivalent to teaching to ..., as Scheffler has demonstrated.[24] If I succeed in teaching children how to draw a sound conclusion from evidence, I have provided them with a skill but I have not necessarily taught them <u>to</u> draw sound conclusions from evidence so that on appropriate, future occasions they <u>will</u> draw sound conclusions from evidence. Teaching a child how to signal a right-hand turn when riding a bicycle cannot be equated with teaching him <u>to</u> signal right-hand turns, for I may claim success in the former task even if the child consistently fails thereafter to signal whenever he is turning right. The logical gap which

akrasia requires thus remains, whether it is propositions or skills which are taught.

Rational instruction, however, need not be directed only towards the form of moral thinking, though this feature does serve to distinguish it clearly from exhortation and preaching. Children can also be taught about the facts of a situation or the consequences of an action, which they might otherwise have not known or ignored (e.g. that playing with a hard cricket ball rather than a tennis ball can cause more damage to persons and property, and therefore needs more care). Such instruction may be helpful in developing children's moral sensitivity in a way in which teaching merely the form of moral reasoning could not do, but it remains necessarily propositional and as such is open to the objections that have already been raised.

Rational instruction, then, appears to score no more highly than did exhortation and preaching as a unitary method of combatting akrasia. Further problems arise at the practical level over how exactly such teaching would be formulated (e.g. how does one teach a five year-old that "ought" is "prescriptive" and "universal"?), and at the theoretical level over what exactly constitutes the"form" of moral reasoning and the logical features of moral concepts. The latter question, in so far as it relates to akrasia, however, has already been discussed in Chapters II - III, and the former will be returned to in Section 4.

(iii) Discussion

The third verbal method of moral education to be examined will be labelled "discussion". This is to be distinguished

from the previous two methods in both its practical implementation and its theoretical rationale. "Discussion" will be taken to refer to a consideration of moral questions in which attention is focussed not upon an individual adult's prescriptions or teaching but upon the arguments and opinions arising from the whole group, in which the adult's role is participatory rather than directly instructional. (For the sake of convenience, the adult will again be referred to as the "teacher", but this does not imply that he is "teaching", nor that he is necessarily a schoolteacher.) The rationale of discussion as a method of moral education rests upon the view that we have to form our moral judgments for ourselves if they are to count as such, and not have them imposed upon us by authorities; and consequently that a good way of learning to work out these autonomous judgments is through the refining process of group discussion.

Three types of discussion will be distinguished, and while these are not necessarily mutually exclusive, they will be considered separately because they reveal different types of strength and weakness as means of combatting akrasia.

(a) Discussion of Hypothetical Moral Situations

This approach, which is characterised by its content more than by its form of procedure, consists of describing to children factual or fictional situations which are thought to pose moral problems or dilemmas, and of encouraging discussion of these situations by asking questions like, "What should the person in the situation have done?" or "What would you have done in that situation?" Brief mention has already been made of this approach in Chapter I, in connection with the Schools Council

Moral Education Project, whose Lifeline material makes wide use of hypothetical situations as a stimulus for discussion.[25] "We do not favour the teacher doing the moral work for children", state the members of the Project. "Our materials approach is designed to help adolescent boys and girls find their own solutions to questions about behaviour in interpersonal situations."[26]

This type of discussion has some affinities with teaching the form of moral reasoning ((ii) above), for the aim is principally to provide children not with ready-made "answers" to moral questions but with skills and opportunities for practice in forming their own moral conclusions. It also shares the main anti-akrasiac strength of the "rational instruction" method in that it may help children to feel that there are logically compelling, "right" ways of working out a moral argument, though unless there is some overt "teaching" as well as "discussion", there can be no guarantee that any clear methodology of moral reasoning will emerge or be grasped. An additional anti-akrasiac advantage might also be claimed for this approach on the grounds that it simulates <u>real</u> moral conflict by getting children to "put themselves" into problematic situations and asking what they would do in them (e.g. part of the Lifeline material consists of a set of booklets under the general title, "What would you have done?" which describe a variety of historical and contemporary incidents in which moral problems arise.)[27]

Discussion of hypothetical moral situations, however, as a method of combatting akrasia, also shares to a large extent the weaknesses of rational instruction already noted: any learning which results will be primarily of propositions and skills, and the child will not necessarily <u>want</u> to use in other contexts the

skills which he acquires and the propositions which he learns during discussion (see (ii) above). Other objections can be levelled against this approach, as I have argued elsewhere,[28] and in particular against its apparent assumption that there is a straightforward and close connection (both logically and empirically) between a child's response to a hypothetical situation and his response to a similar situation personally encountered in real life, i.e. between the moral judgment formed in a hypothetical situation and the decision made and action performed in a similar real-life situation. This assumption leads the Schools Council Moral Education Project, for example, to claim of its Lifeline material, "Without doubt work of this kind can produce improvements in behaviour as well as in attitude ..."[29] and again, "The use of the 'What would you have done?' series is intended to encourage in pupils ... a willingness to act upon one's beliefs."[30] (my italics) The anti-akrasiac value of this approach is thus taken for granted "without doubt", though it can in fact be questioned on the following grounds:

1. Hypothetical dilemmas used in moral education tend to involve a conflict of principles (e.g. the Lifeline booklet, "Solitary Confinement", in the "What would you have done?" series,[31] dealing with the issues of conflicting principles raised by conscientious objectors in wartime). But the conflict which characterises akrasia is not between rival moral principles, but between principle and inclination (e.g. I believe that I ought to tell the policeman the truth about the speed at which I was driving (principle), but I also believe that telling the truth will get me into trouble and I do not want to get into trouble (inclination)). There is no reason to suppose that discussing

moral conundrums of conflicting principles, as in an Ethics seminar, will have any effect on whether one acts on *a* principle which one holds, when faced with a conflicting and tempting inclination.

2. Even if principle-versus-inclination situations are used, doubts still arise over their anti-akrasiac value, particularly in connection with the immediacy factor. Can such a situation (e.g. the policeman example above) qualify in fact as a "moral" situation or experience for the listener to whom it is presented hypothetically? What seems to be lacking in the hypothetical presentation is precisely that feature which would make the real-life situation a *moral* problem - immediacy. It is the immediacy of the inclination (not to get into trouble with the police) which I experience at first hand that *creates* the moral conflict; it is my own situational reasons, motives, wants and emotions which clash with the principle of truth-telling, and so face me with a moral decision (of the "to ..." rather than "that ..." variety).

But the actual motivational effect of states of mind like fear, love, jealousy and grief cannot be properly appreciated "secondhand". However many novels I have read or plays I have seen and discussed in which people fall in love, become jealous or suffer bereavement, and however well I can in discussion describe the situation and feelings of those people, it will still be a completely *new* and *different* experience for me when I personally encounter love or jealousy or bereavement.[32] The psychological effect that these experiences will have on me cannot be rehearsed in advance or predicted.

Consequently it will be impossible to rehearse hypothetical principle-versus-inclination situations, because the inclination is not something that can be experienced "second-hand". It will be the immediate situational factors (e.g. the policeman's manner and appearance; my particular fear of the publicity at that time; the domestic strain I happen to be under just then, etc.) that help to decide whether principle or inclination wins. The lack of immediacy which is a necessary feature of hypothetical moral situations, therefore, suggests that one's response to a hypothetical situation may have little connection with what one's response would be to a similar situation in real life, and that discussing with children the question, "What would you have done in that situation?" will not necessarily produce a "willingness to act upon one's beliefs" in actual situations.

3. Questions about hypothetical moral situations which are put in the form, "What would you do ...?" or "What do you do ...?" are ambiguous as they could be taken to mean either "What do you predict that your action (or reaction) would be ...?" or "What decision do you think you ought to make ...?" and these are very different questions. The answer to the prediction question will be descriptive, while the answer to the decision question is prescriptive, and the two may point in opposite directions; for instance, I may predict that I shall tell the policeman a lie, but decide that I ought to tell him the truth.

Both interpretations reveal pitfalls in connection with the combatting of akrasia. The decision question may be useful in posing a problem which calls for moral reasoning and for the practising of the relevant skills, but it would be rash to assume

either that the decision that ... made about a hypothetical situation will bear much relation to the decision that ... to be made in a similar real-life situation (for the reasons given in 2), or that either decision that ... will necessarily lead to the appropriate decision to ... which is actually taken (for the reasons given in Chapter V, Section 2). The prediction question may be useful in encouraging children to acknowledge their wants and motives more clearly and openly, but it is subject to the same limitations of non-immediacy and non-transferability as is the decision question, and also need not lead to any moral discussion at all unless supplemented by some overt teaching.

Discussion of hypothetical moral situations, therefore, may well improve children's cognitive grasp of the possible dimensions of a moral dilemma by helping them to see how various people's interests and feelings are at stake, and how the problem may allow of differing interpretations, but it does not follow self-evidently from this that such discussion will produce "improvements in behaviour as well as in attitude" or "a willingness to act upon one's beliefs", as the Schools Council Moral Education Project claims.

(b) Neutrally-chaired Discussion

This second discussion method is to be distinguished from the first not necessarily by its content, which could again include hypothetical moral problems, but by its procedure. With the previous method, (a), although the attention is focussed upon the deliberations of the group, the teacher may still play an important directive, though not instructional, role in

initiating the discussion, describing the problem, contributing to the discussion, and even presenting his own viewpoint. With the present method, however, the teacher is cast in the role of a neutral chairman who directs proceedings only in the sense of providing the necessary materials and evidence for the group to be able to discuss all aspects of the question under consideration. The teacher does not declare his own views and opinions, and indeed tries to ensure that no indication whatever is given of what they are, in order that the group may not be influenced by pronouncements backed by the teacher's authority.

The locus classicus for this approach is the Schools Council Humanities Curriculum Project,[33] which although aimed not so much at moral education as at developing social understanding of controversial issues, has been widely debated as a possible method of moral education. The Project has also provoked considerable disagreement over whether, or in what sense, a teacher can be "neutral" in the context of a discussion by children about moral and other controversial questions, and over whether such "neutrality", even if possible, is morally and educationally desirable.[34] The detailed arguments within this debate need not be examined fully here, for the question at issue is not the overall rationale and justification of "neutrally-chaired discussion", but its possible usefulness as a means of combatting akrasia. What effect is the teacher's attempted neutrality likely to have in this respect?

On the positive side, the absence of any instructional influence (other than at the procedural level) should lead to more honest and openly acknowledged reactions to, and appraisals of,

moral questions on the part of the children. The desire to say what the teacher is thought to want to hear, to conform to what are thought to be his expectations, or in other words to use moral concepts descriptively and "sociologically" should be reduced if the teacher consistently refuses to declare his own views, although there will clearly be practical difficulties in hiding those views and in reconciling his neutral role during the discussion with his unavoidably non-neutral role outside the discussion; for example, children who have just witnessed the teacher stopping a fight or reprimanding a bully in the playground will be in no doubt as to his views on violence (in certain contexts, at least), however neutral a stance he manages to adopt in the classroom discussion next period.

On the negative side, neutrally-chaired discussion shares the necessarily "propositional" features of other "verbal" methods already discussed and the consequent motivational problems of "non-immediacy". Also the discussion will often be concerned with hypothetical situations and will thus be open to the same objections as (a).

More specifically, the teacher's neutrality will deprive the children of exposure to the prescriptive and persuasive use of moral language, though this process is probably more influential with young children who are building up their framework of moral concepts than with adolescents, with whom this method is normally used. However, if a group failed to grasp the possible moral dimensions and interpretation of a particular problem, it would be difficult for the teacher to convey these without using prescriptive language in a way forbidden by his neutral role - though he is, of course, free to "introduce" material to the group which

stands for a particular, prescriptive point of view.

A more serious objection is suggested again by certain "non-immediate" features of the method. If a teacher persistently refrains from declaring his own moral beliefs and conclusions while encouraging the members of the group to declare theirs, the impression may be given that discussion of moral issues is yet another school activity which does not really impinge upon the adult world. Just as the games master might send a group of boys off on a cross-country run and then himself retire to the changing-room for a cigarette, so might the neutral teacher in a discussion appear to urge the expression of views and arguments, and the weighing of evidence to form conclusions, yet not to bother to participate in any of these activities himself. Seen in this light, moral discussion would seem to be an intellectual exercise remote from the practical world and the real concerns of adults. Such an interpretation is unlikely to ease the motivational problems of non-immediacy, central to akrasia, and could even widen the gap between moral judgment and action for some children.

(c) Leaderless Discussion

The third discussion method will be labelled "leaderless", for here the teacher's influence is (in theory at least) completely obliterated, even at the procedural level. The group itself, of which the teacher may be a member but with no privileged status, determines the subject of the discussion and the methods of procedure. No constraints, rules or prescriptions are provided by any external authority (though some may be agreed

upon and accepted within the group), and it is the teacher's task to abdicate from his normal role of directing, guiding and supporting, by throwing responsibility for the conduct of the session on to the group itself.

The aim and rationale of this method is supplied not by the content of what is discussed (over which the teacher can have no control if he is genuinely to relinquish his directive powers), but by the increased understanding and awareness of group behaviour which are claimed to result. Participation in this kind of group activity and observation of one's own and other people's reactions and contributions will, it is hoped, provide greater insight into the motivations, emotions and other psychological influences which affect group dynamics. (To classify this as a purely "verbal" method is perhaps misleading, as the behaviour of such groups will not be limited to verbal behaviour necessarily, as will be shown shortly, but it is convenient to consider this method alongside other "discussion" methods.)

The theoretical framework within which this approach is set has originated from recent work on group dynamics and in particular on "T group" theory, stemming initially from the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations.[35] Attempted applications of these theories to a specifically educational context have been made by, for example, Richardson[36] with students on a teacher-training course, and Grainger[37] with children of secondary school age. The latter provides a full description of how the "leaderless discussion" method of moral education might be used with children, and while he at one point claims that the teacher in such discussion

"is not trying to improve the children morally", he sees the aim of the method as giving them "the chance of becoming more skilled in understanding their own actions as individuals and as a group."[38] "The declared aim of the Bullring (the name given to the group) is that the children should study their own behaviour as it occurs, and it is the teacher's task to help them do this."[39]

In view of Grainger's disclaimer about "moral improvement", it might be argued that this form of discussion should not be viewed as a method of moral education at all. However, it is not difficult to conceive it as such, and indeed, despite Grainger's apparent doubts, he is still prepared to give his book the sub-title, "A Classroom Experiment in Moral Education". The educational justification of "studying behaviour" and "understanding actions" must rest partly at least upon the assumption that such study and understanding facilitates rather than hinders moral development; such methods would surely not be described and advocated with the enthusiasm which Grainger shows if he believed that they tended to produce callous, egocentric or manipulative individuals. For these reasons, then, it is necessary to consider "leaderless discussion" as a possible method of moral education and of combatting akrasia.

The main contribution which this method might make towards the combatting of akrasia derives from the honesty factor, for it could be claimed that to observe, study and come to understand group behaviour will increase insight into one's own and other people's wants and motives. By recognising and making explicit what one really wants and what factors weigh most heavily with one within a group situation, one should be able to appraise

one's reaction to that situation more honestly, and perhaps transfer this skill of appraisal to other situations. The child will in this way openly acknowledge not only the justificatory reasons why he ought to do y, but also the explanatory reasons why he in fact wants to do x more than y. This may not lead him actually to modify his wants and so to do what he believes he ought to do (though it may), but he will at least not be relying on the excuse that it is some malfunctioning faculty (i.e. a weak will) which is causing him to act as he does.

Several objections, however, can be levelled against these anti-akrasiac claims. Firstly, description and explanation are again easily confused here. Accounts of what is happening in "leaderless discussion" are inevitably interpretative and theoretical, and the interpretations and theories themselves are frequently speculative and debatable. This tends to pre-judge any objective evaluation of the method's usefulness. Grainger, for example, describes a session in which after "much desultory questioning" one child made and launched a paper dart, which led to the rest of the group also throwing darts and pellets at each other.[40] He comments on this incident:

> "... I tried to convey ... that I felt that the paper-throwing represented interaction - darts were thrown from one side of the circle to the other - and that also people were testing out what was possible in the Bullring by throwing darts at one another and at me."[41]

But this is of course not to describe what happened in the group but to attempt an explanation of it, and other, less theory-laden explanations are equally possible - perhaps the children were interested in aerodynamics rather than group dynamics, or were just bored after the "desultory questioning".

It is then very difficult to present a purely descriptive, account of "leaderless discussion", independent of theoretical interpretation, which suggests any obvious advantages as an anti-akrasiac method.

Secondly, the non-directedness of "leaderless discussion" means that there is no certainty that moral language will be used or moral questions discussed; and even if they are, the teacher will have no control over how the language is used and the questions discussed. If he is genuinely to abdicate from his instructional, authoritative role, he will be in a serious dilemma, qua moral educator, if he hears moral concepts being misused and moral arguments misunderstood. As an equal member of the group, he is entitled to make his own comments and contributions, but any attempt to correct, instruct or direct authoritatively will encourage the group to rely upon him to provide leadership and structure, thus defeating the object of the exercise. Grainger illustrates, perhaps unknowingly, the incompatibility of "leaderless discussion" with exposure to the teacher's use of prescriptive moral language, when describing a visit paid by another teacher to the group:

> "(He) criticised the children openly for behaving childishly by saying, 'I should have thought that an intelligent form like yours could have done better than this. I'm surprised at you!' The children greeted this remark with a mixture of annoyance and exasperation, because, within the context of the Bullring, it was irrelevant."[42]

Perhaps the comment was "irrelevant" to Grainger's conception of the group's function, but the use of concepts like "childish", "intelligent", "better" and "surprised" is not irrelevant to the assimilation of a prescriptive, linguistic framework and the development of moral attitudes, which have been

shown to have close connections, via the language factor, with the problem of akrasia.

Thirdly, in so far as "leaderless discussion" may consider and form conclusions about hypothetical (moral) situations, it will be open to the objections which were rehearsed in (a).

This first half of the typology has distinguished various "verbal" methods of moral education, and has attempted to show that any one such method has serious weaknesses if conceived of as an adequate technique in itself for combatting akrasia. On the other hand, each of the methods examined has also revealed some possible anti-akrasiac strengths in the light of the explanatory factors suggested in Chapter V; these strengths will be returned to in the final section (4).

The "verbal" methods described form a continuum rather than a set of clearly separable activities. In some cases it would be difficult to classify a particular "verbal" approach, as practised by a teacher, neatly under one of the headings suggested, and in others a combination of methods will be used which blurs the dividing lines. Nevertheless the classification is useful in demarcating the varieties of procedure and content which a teacher can use "verbally" for the purposes of moral education.

Similarly with the "practical" methods next to be examined, there will in practice often be an overlap between and combination of the methods used. In addition, language will nearly always be used in connection with "practical" methods, which means that almost any of the "practical" methods may also incorporate almost any of the "verbal" ones, thus yielding a

formidable complexity of possible combinations. For the sake of simplicity, however, "practical" methods will be examined individually and, as far as possible, independently of "verbal" ones in the following section, leaving the question of the most promising combinations until the final section.

B. "Practical" Methods

These will be taken to refer to activities in which the child is either the agent or the recipient and which are intended to influence his moral thinking, beliefs and behaviour. Although these activities will usually involve the use of language, as mentioned above, they can be distinguished from "verbal" methods in that it is the practical, non-verbal activity which characterises the method and is thought to constitute its effectiveness and justification as a means of moral education. Four categories of activity will be examined, to be labelled: (i) rewarding and punishing, (ii) example-following, (iii) role play and drama, (iv) disciplined activities (to be sub-divided into "sporting", "co-operative", "communal" and "individual" activities).

(i) Rewarding and Punishing

These methods cause the child to experience pleasant or unpleasant consequences as a result of a particular action in order that certain types of behaviour may be encouraged or discouraged in future. Two distinct forms of reward and punishment can be identified - the "external" and the "internal". The former refers to the performance of actions by a person in

authority, which the child is intended either to enjoy or to dislike (e.g. showing approval, smiling, giving a present or promising a treat on the one hand, and scowling, shouting, smacking or witholding affection on the other). The latter refers to the creation of a state of mind in the child which is intended to ensure that he will feel pleased and satisfied when behaving "rightly", and unhappy and guilty when behaving "wrongly"; the authority figure in this case does not have to be physically present for the reward or punishment to be experienced, and the explanatory notion of "conscience" is often used to designate this internalised source of authority (see Chapter III).

The main strengths of reward and punishment as a means of combatting akrasia derive from their close association with wants. The akrasiac, it has been argued, wants to do what he in fact does more than what he believes he ought to do. Rewards and punishments, however, introduce a further motivational factor into the situation, for if they are to be effective and recognisable <u>as</u> rewards and punishments for the child, he must <u>want</u> to gain the reward and want to avoid the punishment, and these further wants may modify or outweigh other wants which he has. Thus, the typical akrasiac situation of sincerely believing that one ought to do y, yet in fact doing x because one wants to do x more than y, may be modified by the additional consideration of a prospective reward or punishment which the agent wants to gain or avoid <u>more</u> than he wants to do x. So a boy may sincerely believe, for example, that he ought to see his little sister safely home from school, want (more) to go off and play football with his friends, yet want (more still)

conscience.

Wants can be modified in this way as a result both of "external" and of "internal" rewards and punishments, as in the above example. In the latter case, although the action y may appear motivationally unattractive in itself, the prospective glow of satisfaction at having done y, or the prospective guilt-feelings at having done x, may lead the agent to feel that he wants to do y rather than x. Indeed the "internal" type could well be more effective in combatting akrasia than the "external", for if the internalised authority of "conscience" is sufficiently established and predictable, the agent can be certain that doing what he believes he ought to do will be rewarded, and doing otherwise will be punished, whereas with an "external" authority there is always the chance of escaping his notice and thereby avoiding punishment or missing out on the reward. This is perhaps the reason why Kohlberg found students at his "upper" levels of moral development to be much more likely than those at "lower" levels to act in accordance with their moral judgments,[43] for the sanctions operative at the "upper" levels (e.g. "I couldn't live with myself if I did that") are unavoidable in a way in which those associated with the "lower" levels (e.g. "I'll get a good hiding for doing that if my father finds out") are not.

It could be argued, then, that a systematic programme of rewards and punishments could be devised to combat akrasia, starting with the simple modification of young children's wants by applying external sanctions which would gradually become internalised in the form of an authoritative and authoritarian conscience, thus producing consistently virtuous, non-akrasiac behaviour.

Three types of objection, however, can be brought against this argument. Firstly, it can be questioned whether rewards and punishments, though able to modify behaviour, can get to grips with the problem of akrasia as such. To combat akrasia it is not sufficient to get the agent merely to do what he believes he ought to do; he must also do it because he believes he ought. If I, in a potentially akrasiac situation, believe that I ought to leave the party in order to drive the baby-sitter home by a reasonable hour, yet want to stay on because the food, drink and company are so attractive, my behaviour may be modified by my being dragged or cajoled to the car by my wife; but my akrasia is unaffected, because I have not left because I felt I ought to. Similarly, the child who thinks he ought to take his sister home from school, but does not want to, is not brought through the use of rewards and punishments to act as he feels he ought because he feels he ought, but because he wants to gain the reward or avoid the punishment. Furthermore, there is no reason why the application of an external sanction should make the action itself more attractive or desirable; indeed, the fact that an additional incentive has to be provided in order to encourage the action draws attention to its intrinsic unpleasantness.

Even with some "internal" rewards and punishments similar difficulties may arise, for if it is only the affective sanctions of "conscience", rather than rational conviction, that stand between the agent and akrasia, he will do what he believes he ought to do not because he believes he ought, but because he wants to gain satisfaction and avoid anxiety. Indeed, when "conscience" is operating at the "irrational" level (see Chapter III), the possibility of justificatory reasons existing

independently of conscience's sanctions is not even recognised, with the result that "I believe I ought to do y" becomes the equivalent of "I will feel guilty if I don't do y," (as in Hare's "psychological oughts"). With "rational" conscience, however, this objection does not so clearly apply, for conscience in this sense (as described in Chapter III) refers to a judgmental process closely akin to moral reasoning. The person who defers to his "rational conscience" then is doing what he believes he ought because the sincerity of his belief means that he knows he will be "punished by his conscience" (i.e. blame himself) if he fails to act as he believes he ought. Even in this case, however, a distinction could be drawn between the person who does y purely and simply because he sincerely believes he ought and the person who does y because of the unpleasant consequences of acting otherwise which he foresees he would suffer as a result of sincerely believing that he ought to do y. In short, then, rewards and punishments, whether "external" or "internal", can make a child want to behave in such a way as to gain the former and avoid the latter, but cannot make him want to do what he believes he ought to do purely and directly because he believes he ought.

A second, related objection concerns the limitations of rewards and punishments with respect to their generality and transferability. "Ought"-judgments imply the backing of justificatory reasons which in turn appeal to principles of a generalised nature and wide range of applicability, but rewards and punishments are tied to specific instances of particular forms of behaviour. The child who is punished for not seeing his sister safely home may, when a similar occasion arises again, take his

sister home because he wants to avoid further punishment, but punishment alone cannot produce more generalised, principled patterns of behaviour like acting unselfishly or caring for others in greater need than oneself. For a child to see particular instances as falling under the general principle of unselfishness and being justified by it, some form of verbal preaching, instruction or discussion will be required, and while these may of course be combined with techniques of reward and punishment it will not be these techniques but the verbal methods which help the child to see that justificatory reasons and principles of a similar kind lie behind actions like sharing sweets, sharing treats, sharing household chores, and sharing parental affection. Rewards and punishments without verbal explanation and teaching are likely to produce arbitrary, even inconsistent behaviour, as it is practically (and perhaps logically) impossible to specify all possible instances of selfishness and unselfishness, applying the appropriate sanction in each case. "Internal" rewards and punishments will also share these features of non-generality and non-transferability if the internalisation process has again not been accompanied by an element of verbal explanation and explicit rationalisation: "irrational" conscience may, for instance, punish its owner for being late for a meeting with his boss but not for being slow in returning his neighbour's lawnmower, even though a similar amount of inconvenience is incurred in each case, and a child may feel guilty about being rude to a teacher but not to a stranger. In so far, then, as akrasia involves the acceptance but non-implementation of justificatory reasons and generalised principles,

rewards and punishments by themselves, lacking as they do the necessary generality of application and transfer, can contribute little towards combatting it for they can only introduce an additional, highly specific motivational factor, and are unable to teach children to acquire and apply moral reasoning and moral principles. The sanctions associated with "rational" conscience, however, are not open to this objection, as they are grounded in the justificatory reasons and generalised principles which the agent has already accepted (see Chapter III).

Thirdly and lastly, the methodology of rewards and punishments can again easily confound description with explanation. As mentioned above, even the terms "reward" and "punishment" themselves are explanatory in the sense that they go beyond a factual description of events (e.g. "smiling", "smacking", etc.) to suggest an interpretation of such events as being intended to cause the recipient pleasure or pain which is in turn thought likely to influence his future behaviour. The notions of "internalisation" and of "conscience" are to an even greater extent theory-laden and consequently confusing if included in an apparently descriptive account; if it is claimed that an effective anti-akrasiac method would be to build up a strong conscience by means of a system of rewards and punishments which become internalised, the notions of "conscience" and of "internalisation" are being used not to describe the method but to explain by reference to a particular theory why doing certain things to children leads them to behave in certain ways, and this theoretical explanation can be questioned. Rewarding and punishing are not descriptively equivalent to building up a

conscience by internalisation, as the criminal recidivist demonstrates; children too may scorn rewards, resent punishments, and adopt patterns of behaviour directly opposed to those which the rewards and punishments are intended to produce. In seeking means of combatting akrasia, therefore, it is more useful to attempt to delineate at a descriptive level the logical and psychological considerations which may affect whether or not an agent acts upon his beliefs than to cause the problem apparently to disappear by introducing explanatory, theory-laden constructs under a descriptive guise.

In short, then, rewards and punishments are clearly of motivational importance in influencing children to act in one way rather than another through the medium of their wants, but they are equally clearly an inadequate means in themselves of combatting akrasia. The rewards and punishments of most anti-akrasiac value seem to be those associated with "rational" conscience.

(ii) Example-following

The second "practical" method - that of "example-following" - will be considered more briefly, as it has much in common with rewarding and punishing as a possible means of combatting akrasia. The rationale of this method is that the child comes to behave morally not by being told to do so or by being rewarded or punished, but by "identifying" with somebody who exemplifies moral qualities, including "strength of will". The child's admiration and respect for this person (to be referred to as the "exemplar") is such that he, consciously or unconsciously, models himself upon him and tries to follow his example.

Morality is on this view thought to be "caught rather than taught", and to be best learnt on an apprenticeship basis.

The main anti-akrasiac strength of this method lies, as in (i), in the area of motivation and wants. If a child is so impressed by his exemplar that he wants to become as much like him as possible in all respects (including his moral behaviour), there will be little difficulty in getting the child to act morally if his exemplar acts morally, even if the moral action itself has motivationally unattractive features.

But this argument invites objections to example-following as an anti-akrasiac method, for how exactly is the exemplar to demonstrate his "strength of will" to the child? A child can no doubt pick up in this way certain attitudes, mannerisms and types of behaviour, and so learn, for instance, to give up his seat to old ladies on buses, to be kind to animals, and to put his hand to his mouth when coughing, but how can he learn purely by example-following to act upon what he believes to be right? The exemplar's overt behaviour alone would not be sufficient; he would also have to tell the child what he believed to be right and why he believed it to be right, before the child could start to appreciate what it was to act upon one's beliefs; but the method is then better described as some form of verbal teaching than as example-following. Any beliefs which might be said to be picked up as a result of example-following (e.g. by hearing the exemplar express the view that one ought always to give up one's seat to old ladies in buses) will in an important sense be not the child's own beliefs but a reflection of those of his exemplar which he has adopted because he wants to be like him, and not because of the content of the beliefs themselves. As these are not the

child's own beliefs, he is not in the same position as his exemplar in acting upon them, and consequently cannot be said to have learned by example to act upon his beliefs.

Example-following therefore resembles reward and punishment in being unable to make children want to do what they believe they ought to do because they so believe; a further resemblance arises from the use of explanatory rather than descriptive terminology, for "identification" is as theory-laden a concept as "internalisation" and open to the same objections. Finally, the inadequacies of a purely verbal form of example-following have already been described in A, (i), in connection with the telling of stories about saints and heroes. Like reward and punishment, therefore, example-following can in itself contribute little to the combatting of akrasia, though its motivational effect in modifying children's wants may be useful if combined with other methods.

(iii) Role-play and Drama

A third possible "practical" method is to involve children in dramatic activity in which they can adopt the role of another person and attempt to enact a situation within that role. The morally educative aim of such activities is twofold: firstly, to put children into others' shoes in order that they may "identify" with others and develop greater understanding of their feelings and wants, and secondly to encourage them to consider moral questions and dilemmas from various viewpoints. "Role play is an excellent way of encouraging emotional as well as rational learning in school," claims the Schools Council Moral

Education Project,[44] and recommends the method especially for its "In Other People's Shoes" unit.

As an anti-akrasiac method, however, it can be dealt with briefly, as it has close parallels with certain of the "verbal" methods already discussed, and reveals similar strengths and weaknesses. In particular it resembles "leaderless discussion" in that the participants, if they are really to take on the role of another person, must be free to explore that role as they wish and to "lose" themselves in it without fear of didactic, authoritative intervention from the teacher.

While it is possible that role play, like "leaderless discussion", may encourage a more accurate and open acknowledgement of what oneself and others really want and feel in various situations, and so help to combat akrasia via the dishonesty factor, the method is open to similar objections to those which were brought against "leaderless discussion":-

1. Description and explanation are again confused, particularly in the notion of "identification". Children who are trying to act as they think another person would act are not necessarily "identifying" with that person in the sense of developing sympathetic understanding of him; perhaps they are simply trying to give a realistic, convincing performance without increasing their empathic insight at all. Acting a part or playing a role is not descriptively equivalent to "identifying" with the character portrayed.

2. There is no reason why role-play and drama should help to develop <u>moral</u> attitudes and qualities. Children may be attracted by the less desirable aspects of the role they adopt

(e.g. Hamlet's procrastination rather than his sensitivity), and carry these over into their own behaviour.

3. However good the child becomes at adopting another role, the situation enacted must remain a hypothetical one. To take another example from Lifeline, if drama and role-play are used, as suggested, in connection with the "What would you have done?" unit, a child who plays the role of Anne Frank in the "Arrest!" incident[45] cannot undergo the situational experiences of a Jewish girl hiding from the Germans in 1944, for these will involve emotional reactions which it is both logically and psychologically impossible for an English schoolgirl taking part in a dramatic exercise in 1977 to experience "secondhand". The limitations of hypothetical moral situations discussed in A, (ii), therefore also apply to this "practical" method.

Role play and drama does not then reveal any particularly distinctive or original features as a possible method of combatting akrasia, unlike the fourth category to be examined.

(iv) Disciplined Activities

This final category includes under its general heading an assortment of methods upon which teachers have (thinkingly or unthinkingly) tended to place much reliance, partly perhaps because they can be quite easily incorporated as a structured, integral element within the curriculum and general way of life of a school. It is a common assumption that certain activities are more likely than others to develop moral qualities such as reliability, determination, courage, strength of will, of resolve and of character. Arnold-Brown, whose account of Gordonstoun and other similar educational institutions will be referred to

several times in this section, summarises this view as follows:-

> "This forms the crux of character training; one must be led or compelled through experience if one lacks the will to forge ahead on one's own. Character can be permanently affected within a matter of seconds ... If chance happenings, great and small, can influence character, then selected experience can do the same, but in selected ways."[46]

Games and other physically taxing activities have traditionally been thought to provide this kind of "selected experience", and their inclusion on school curricula has often been justified on moral grounds as well as on aesthetic or health-giving ones. More recently, the range of educational activities believed to promote moral qualities has been broadened to include both physical pursuits of a non-competitive type (e.g. rock-climbing, camping, sailing, etc.) and also projects designed to bring pupils into contact with other members of the community through participation in some form of social service.

Four types of "disciplined activity", to be labelled a) "sporting", b) "co-operative", c) "communal" and d) "individual", will be distinguished and examined in some detail. The four have much in common as possible anti-akrasiac methods, but will be considered separately as they also reveal some different strengths and weaknesses.

a) Sporting Activities

As noted above, participation in sports and games is commonly assumed to aid "character-building". ("Character-building" will here be used as a convenient term to refer to the acquisition of the moral qualities mentioned above, despite its obvious explanatory overtones.) Not all sports and games, however, are equally valued in this respect, and the differing

degrees of moral worth that are attributed to different games illustrate those features which are held to be particularly morally educative. Cricket and rugger provide good examples of allegedly "character-building" games, in contrast to, say, snooker (prowess at which is often associated with moral disrepute and a "misspent youth") or chess (which carries a neutral moral value with perhaps a suspicion of cold intellectualism, opportunism and mercilessness). This contrast suggests that the distinctively "character-building" features of sporting activities are thought to derive from:-

1. The amount of physical exertion and risk involved.
2. Opportunities to plan and practise and perform physical manoeuvres which require application, determination and some degree of physical courage.
3. Opportunities for co-operation with other members of a team, working towards a common goal.

The main anti-akrasiac strength of sporting activities lies in the areas of motivation and habituation. By participating in sports and games which demand effort, determination and courage if they are to be played well, a child may come to gain satisfaction from playing well and consequently <u>want</u> to continue to exercise the qualities which enable him to do so. These wants will be further strengthened by the corporate endeavour of his team and the approval and encouragement coming from individual members of it. Habits such as never giving up till the last whistle, tackling low, and getting behind the line of the ball will become established, and the more generalised qualities and traits associated with such habits may be incorporated within

the child's "character".

This traditional justification can however be questioned on at least two grounds. Firstly, the motivating and habituating factor, if it exists, will arise not from the actual physical activity of games-playing but from the social and moral ethos within which the games are played, and this ethos is created verbally rather than physically (e.g. by exhortations to "play up", "get stuck in", "keep at it", etc. and by teaching and discussion about tactics and playing as a team). The mere act of playing a game is unlikely in itself to affect a child's "character" - particularly if the child in question happens to detest games. Indeed the claim that games-playing is a sound method of combatting akrasia appears distinctly incongruous when it is realised that games themselves provide ideal opportunities for, and classic examples of, akrasiac behaviour. It is as easy to know that one ought to play a straight bat, yet in the heat of the moment take a cross-batted swipe at the ball, as it is to know that one ought to keep one's temper in an argument, yet in the heat of the moment lose it. Also, such akrasiac lapses do not only occur in children who are learning to play a game but even in seasoned performers who have had years of practice and experience in these allegedly "character-building" activities; an excellent example of akrasia was provided by England's Test batsmen on the last Australian tour, who no doubt believed that they ought not to back away from the Australian fast bowlers, yet in fact consistently did so (presumably because they wanted to avoid a fractured skull more than they wanted to adhere to the canons of batsmanship), and were consequently criticised for their weakness and lack of moral fibre.

Secondly, even if qualities associated with "strength of will" could be acquired on the games field, can they be transferred and applied more generally to non-sporting, moral situations? Just as temporal non-immediacy raises doubts about the anti-akrasiac efficacy of methods relying on some form of verbal teaching and learning which it is hoped will be implemented in practice at a later date, so does it also suggest uncertainty as to whether a boy's learning to face up to fast bowling this term will make him more likely to own up to a punishable offence next term. Even experienced sportsmen, as in the previous objection, do not seem to lend particular support to the transferability theory, for international games-players are not especially renowned for their self-control either off or on the field of play.

Sporting activities therefore have a possible anti-akrasiac value in terms of motivation and habituation, but cannot be assumed to develop the moral qualities which have been traditionally claimed for them.

b) Co-operative Activities

These bear some similarity to "sporting" activities, and share some of the strengths and weaknesses mentioned in a). The main differentia, however, between "sporting" and "co-operative" activities lies in the latter's non-competitiveness and emphasis upon mutual reliance. In both hazardous pursuits like rock-climbing and less spectacular ones like camping, "co-operative" activities are characterised not by conflict, aggression and the intention of beating the other side (as in

most sports and games), but rather by collective effort and mutual dependence in the pursuit of a shared goal or the enjoyment of a common experience. While this co-operative element may often enter into "sporting" activities also in the form of "team spirit", this is a contingent feature for it is quite possible to play "for oneself" both in individualistic games like golf and tennis and even (selfishly) in team games; but one cannot climb rock faces or sing around camp fires on one's own or "for oneself".

The motivation/habituation argument in a) is strengthened when activities possess this "co-operative" feature. By participating in such activities, a child is likely to develop attitudes and habits which make him want to be thought reliable, to play his part within the group, and to consider others. This may in turn help to lessen the remoteness of other people's interests compared with his own, which was claimed in the discussion of "immediacy" in Chapter V to be a factor logically related to moral akrasia.

A further anti-akrasiac merit of "co-operative" activities could be that they lead to increased self-knowledge. By being faced with challenges, tests and the responsibility for the safety and comfort of others, it could be argued that the child discovers a lot about his own fears, wants, abilities and limitations. "Outward Bound" schools, for example, claim to "present each boy with a set of conditions and give him, possibly for the first time, the opportunity to discover himself. These conditions, self-discipline, team-work, adventure, physical hardship and some risk, are rarely met with except in time of war."[47] If "self-discovery" does in fact result from "co-operative" activities, it

might help to combat akrasia by producing a more honest appraisal and open recognition of one's wants and motives, as has been argued earlier.

The anti-akrasiac claims of "co-operative" activities, however, are open to similar objections concerning transferability as were "sporting" activities. The determination and resolution displayed on the end of a rope may have no more carry-over to every-day moral situations than that shown at the wicket or in the scrum. Nor will that determination necessarily be motivated by factors which are characteristically anti-akrasiac; the child who shows determination in rock-climbing may want to impress the rest of the group, save face, or not be thought the "odd one out" - motives which could well lead him in a situation of moral conflict to do what he believed he ought not to do. Furthermore, to claim that "co-operative" activities involve "self-discovery" is again not to describe what happens in such activities but to suggest an optimistic interpretation of what might happen; the link between participation in physical, "co-operative" activities and the development of "self-knowledge" is contingent and tenuous - dedicated boy scouts, Morris dancers and C.C.F. members are not typically thought to be exemplars of self-awareness.

c) Communal Activities

These differ from the previous two categories in that they contain no sporting or competitive element, nor even in many cases a physically strenuous one. They are characterised not so much by a concentration of effort and attention upon an activity

confined to the group of which the child is a member, but rather by interaction between the child and his group on the one hand and other members of the community on the other - for example, in projects involving visiting and rendering practical assistance to elderly or disabled people, or the building and supervising of an adventure playground for young children.

The anti-akrasiac strengths of this method will encompass those claimed for "co-operative" activities (re. motivation and habituation, and self-knowledge), but in addition the opportunities for contact with and service to other individuals and groups with whom the child is unfamiliar may be thought to have further advantages. While "co-operative" activities may perhaps lessen the remoteness of other people's interests within the child's particular group, "communal" activities may extend this process to include consideration of the interests of those whom the child and his group would normally know little about, and whom they might not otherwise regard as equal "persons" at all. This could in turn lead to a general minimising of the effect of the immediacy factor, as the child comes to appreciate that he can sympathise and "identify" with a wide variety of people and not just with those of his own age, family, class or background, whom he normally wants to help and consider. Thus, helping old people to keep their gardens in trim might encourage children not only to identify more easily with old people's wants and fears but also more generally to broaden their concept of "person" to include members of other groups (e.g. cantankerous, elderly schoolteachers) whose interests had previously seemed too remote, unfamiliar and unfathomable to be considered.

Again, however, the main doubts centre around the question of transferability. Children who are brought into contact with old people in this way *may* develop sympathy and understanding which motivate them to want to treat these old people as they believe they ought (e.g. not disappointing them by missing the regular visiting day), but this is no reason to assume that this non-akrasiac behaviour should extend to their dealings with *other* groups for whom they have less sympathy and understanding. Furthermore, "communal" activities provide yet another example of optimistic interpretation rather than mere description, for *contact* with old people (or any other group) by no means entails "*identification*" with them, in the sense of increased sympathetic insight. Such contact may equally well result in mutual dislike, misunderstanding, suspicion and fear, leaving the child with an even more remote conception of the other's interests and even less desire to consider them than before the contact occurred; this is particularly likely to happen if the contact is assumed to be *in itself* morally educative and is not supplemented by verbal teaching or discussion.

d) *Individual Activities*

This final group of activities does not fall precisely within any of the above categories, but is often associated with the notion of "character-building". The activities consist of routine exercises or duties, often physically taxing, irksome or difficult in nature, to be performed regularly and individually. A good example is provided by the activities prescribed by the Gordonstoun training plan:

> "The paper was ruled into columns, each column a day of the week, each line marked on the left with such phrases as: Teeth brushed, Rope climbed, Skipping, Press-ups, Cold Shower - and so on."[48]

The Gordonstoun plan had a double justification, each of which might be considered as anti-akrasiac. Firstly, it "helped each boy to become self-reliant, it helped him to acquire regular habits, to note when irregularity was creeping in ..."[49] and secondly, by trusting each child to fill in his own chart unchecked each day:

> "... youngsters were trained to be honest with themselves; they are as unlikely to develop honesty by chance as they are unlikely to win the high jump, or a scholarship, by chance. To fill in the chart each evening forced a boy to face facts and to face the truth ... to fight the temptation to make excuses or to hide the truth from himself."[50]

These justifications in terms of habituation and self-awareness do not however evade the now familiar objections concerning transferability and optimistic interpretation, which need not be further elaborated. Arnold-Brown, while advocating the Gordonstoun system, himself suggests objections on the latter score:

> "The question may be asked: What is to prevent a boy becoming not merely careless but callous to truth and untruth? If there is no check to ensure that a boy takes the trouble to think when filling in the chart, may not the system drive dishonesty deep into the soul? Does the training plan produce virtuous prigs, worried failures and cynics, as has been suggested?"[51]

"Disciplined activities", therefore, of the various types discussed under a) - d) have much in common with regard to their strengths and weaknesses as methods of combatting akrasia. Their main value lies in their power to modify children's wants through the media of habit-formation and social expectations, but unjustified assumptions are often made about the degree of

transferability and the range of application of what is learned from such activities, and optimistic interpretations are often substituted for descriptions of what actually happens in them.

This typology of "our ways of teaching morality" has tended to confirm the hypothesis that no one method is likely to be adequate in itself as a means of combatting akrasia. The complexity of the factors involved in akrasia means that any single method, while perhaps making a useful contribution at one level, is bound to be seriously deficient at another. The following, final section will therefore proceed on the basis that a combination of methods is needed, and will attempt to synthesise some of the positive features that have emerged from this section. It must be re-emphasised, however, that even the most promising and fruitful combinations of methods cannot be expected to prevent akrasia, if the freedom of the moral agent is to be preserved; the most that they will be able to achieve is to increase the likelihood of young people (as moral agents) acting as they believe they ought.

4. How can akrasia best be combatted?

It was argued in Section 2 that close logical relationships exist between (i) conceptions of morality, (ii) conceptions of moral education, (iii) explanations of akrasia, and (iv) methods of moral education, particularly designed to combat akrasia. Some of these relationships have been further illustrated in the typology of methods presented in Section 3. Any suggested anti-akrasiac methods, then, must fall within a wider, explanatory,

ethical framework, and the particular framework which has been constructed within this study provides the particular theoretical basis from which criticisms and evaluations of the various methods were launched in the previous section, and also from which the more constructive proposals within this section will be derived.

The strategy of this section will be not simply to repeat the merits of particular methods, as noted in Section 3, but to approach the question of how best to combat akrasia from a different direction, by examining the practical, methodological implications of the three central features of akrasia described in Chapter V. This will have the effect of broadening the dimensions of this concluding section, of further illustrating the logical relationships which were examined in Section 2, of thereby linking the argument developed in previous chapters with this concluding section, and of enabling the merits of various methods described in Section 3 to be re-examined from another viewpoint. Some methodological implications of the dishonesty, language and immediacy factors will therefore be examined and linked with the anti-akrasiac merits of various methods already noted (A), to be followed by some conclusions of a more general nature (B).

A. Methodological implications of the three factors

(i) The Dishonesty Factor

One central feature of both moral and prudential akrasia, it was argued in Chapter V, is a failure on the part of the agent to acknowledge, to himself or to others, those counter-vailing factors which at the time outweigh for him the justificatory

reasons backing his "ought"-judgment. His overall appraisal of the situation is for various reasons not fully spelled-out and his failure to act as he believes he ought is attributed to the causal influence of "weak-will" rather than to his actual wants.

It could be objected at the outset that, even if teaching methods could be devised to encourage children to make more honest appraisals of their wants, this would not necessarily help to combat akrasia. The likelihood of a child doing or not doing what he believed he ought to do would, on this view, be unchanged; he would simply have a fuller understanding and a more open acceptance of his reasons for acting as he did. However, while it is true that the honesty factor does not have the same sort of direct causal connection with akrasia that the other two factors do, a more honest appraisal of one's wants may achieve more than merely legislating the concept of "weak-will" out of existence by a theoretical re-interpretation of the problem. Coming to acknowledge what one really wants is a necessary pre-condition of any re-examination and conscious modification of those wants, and the akrasiac may fail at the latter stage because he has failed at the former. It is reasonable to suppose, therefore, that any methods which help children to understand and acknowledge their wants and motives could also be influential in encouraging a more balanced, controlled and considered appraisal and possibly a consequent modification of those wants and motives, which could in turn have a marked effect upon the incidence of akrasia. Socrates' claims for self-knowledge were shown in Chapter II to be extravagant, but that is not to say that increased self-knowledge may not be essential if the likelihood of akrasia is to be reduced.

The akrasiac's failure to acknowledge the motivational factors which in fact weigh most heavily with him, it was argued in Chapter V, may fall into one of two categories: he may be psychologically unable to acknowledge these factors, or he may, as Fingarette puts it, be in the position of "the self-deceiver (who) commits himself to avoid spelling-out his commitment ... (and) has decisive reasons for his commitment not to spell this engagement out."[52] The methodological implications of these two possibilities must be considered separately.

The first category is of less philosophical and educational interest than the second. The child who, for psychological reasons, is unable to acknowledge either to himself or another the factors which actually are weighing most heavily with him may, on the one hand, be suffering from some pathological condition requiring "treatment" of a psychiatric kind. Or on the other hand it might be argued that <u>all</u> young children are subject to this inability, simply because they have not yet developed the self-awareness and degree of detachment necessary to be able to identify objectively what their wants and motives really are; maturational factors may well be more important than educational ones in the young child's gradual discarding of his egocentric perspective. Psychological inability, then, whether of a pathological or maturational kind, offers moral education little scope; its only possible contribution would seem to lie in the area of linguistic development, where verbal methods of various kinds may help to provide young children with a vocabulary and conceptual framework by means of which they may be able to start to identify, differentiate and so spell-out their own wants, wishes, motives and emotions.

The second category is educationally far more suggestive. A child may be quite capable of spelling-out what he really wants most and what really weighs most heavily with him in a particular situation, but, as was suggested in Chapter V, because of the moral dimensions of that situation and the moral expectations surrounding it, be unwilling to declare, to himself or to others, his real priorities - i.e. the greater importance that he attaches to non-moral considerations. The schoolboy using the Latin crib, for example, was not psychologically unable to admit that he attached greater importance to maintaining his record of good work than to avoiding cheating and deception, but the moral context within which his dilemma arose led him to formulate his judgment of it in the incomplete but morally respectable form - "I believe that I ought not to use the crib"; his subsequent failure to act upon this belief in turn allows the introduction of the notion of "weakness", which by its suggestion of a causal explanation invites less moral censure than an open admission of his non-moral priorities.

A number of the methods discussed in Section 3 were thought to have possible value as means of developing self-awareness - in particular, discussion, role-play and drama, and co-operative and individual disciplined activities. The possible strengths of these methods and their connection with the honesty factor will not be repeated here, but a few general observations will be made in the hope that some pointers may emerge to provide some guidance in the murky area of "self-knowledge".

a) Didactic verbal methods are unlikely to achieve much, though with older children there may be value in teaching psycho-

logical and sociological theories of motivation. A wide gulf could still exist, however, between a theoretical understanding of this kind and an open acknowledgment of personal wants and motives.

b) Group discussion also has only a limited value, for it will take place within the context of group norms and expectations which will influence what individual members of the group feel to constitute an acceptable and respectable set of priorities. Furthermore, the teacher's participation in the discussion, either as leader or as an allegedly non-privileged member, is very likely to carry with it, at least in the pupils' minds, some associations of authority and prescription which may militate against the individual's acknowledgment of his wants and motives even to himself, let alone publicly to the group and the teacher.

c) It appears to follow from b) that any verbal, anti-akrasiac methods must aim primarily at creating an atmosphere which is as free as possible from conventional constraints and in which children do not feel vulnerable to moral censure, if intellectual dishonesty is to be avoided. An important factor here could be the degree of mutual consideration and sympathetic understanding within the group; a child will be more ready to admit that he really wants to let off steam at a football match rather than visit his invalid grandmother (which he believes he ought to do) if he realises that others can find themselves in similar predicaments, can experience similar feelings, and can sympathise with his feelings. If a non-censorious atmosphere of this kind can be created, there will be more chance of a child acknowledging, examining and appraising what he really wants,

and less danger of him merely saying what he thinks he is expected to say. "Leaderless" discussion could be a particularly useful method in this respect, provided that its limitations noted in Section 3 are borne in mind.

d) A non-censorious atmosphere is incompatible with prescriptive preaching and exhortation, and perhaps with some forms of instruction also. Self-deception of the kind that is central to akrasia can occur only when prescriptions and prohibitions are influential in shaping the akrasiac's "ought"-judgment, though not sufficiently influential to secure action in conformity with that judgment. Paradoxically, however, exposing children to the prescriptive function of language has also been proposed as a means of <u>combatting</u> akrasia. This will be further examined in sub-section (ii) below, but the paradox can perhaps be partially resolved at this point by the suggestion that ineffective prescription is worse than no prescription at all. Just as a teacher loses more authority by continuing to issue instructions which are not followed than by lowering his demands to a more realistic level, so may the creation of an over-censorious atmosphere produce not compliance but merely a desire to avoid censure, partly as a result of the kind of intellectual dishonesty which has been described. It will be important, then, for the child not to set his moral sights, or have them set for him, too high, for unrealistic demands, whether self-imposed or externally imposed, can only result in failure, discouragement, and either cynicism or a guilt-ridden retreat to self-deception. Benson's remarks in this connection are of interest to the teacher and parent as well as to the moral philosopher:

> "I should welcome the recognition that the suppression of desires is sometimes just not worth the sweat and one would to better to adopt a principle which is easier to live with. Writers on ethics still tend to speak as though the task of the will is to beat the passions into submission in the interests of morality. There is also the task of exploring one's powers in order to discover what principles one can realistically commit oneself to. Weakness of will is sometimes what, in our zeal for self-castigation, we call the inevitable result of moral hubris."[53]

e) As far as "practical" methods are concerned, actual experience will be of more use than simulation in developing self-awareness. Simulations are necessarily hypothetical and thereby open to the objections raised against the use of hypothetical moral situations as an anti-akrasiac device; this will be further discussed in connection with the immediacy factor in sub-section (iii) below. "Disciplined activities", then, should be able to contribute more than role-play and drama in this respect. A child will come to know his own strengths and weaknesses, his fears and desires, his prejudices and sympathies, by experiencing them in actual situations of the types described under sporting, co-operative, communal and individual activities; he will not gain this direct knowledge and experience by attempting to "put himself" into an imaginary situation or, more difficult still, into another person's shoes in that situation. Simulated experience will produce simulated reactions and judgments, which are more likely to express what the child feels he is <u>expected</u> to say and do than what he would really <u>want</u> to do in that situation (which is in any case difficult to predict hypothetically, as argued earlier).

The honesty factor, then, when considered alongside the typology of moral education methods, reveals a number of

suggestive implications for the combatting of akrasia. Several of these will be developed further in the following sub-sections (ii) and (iii), for the three factors are interconnected at various points, as was shown in Chapter V.

(ii) The Language Factor

Various aspects of language were shown in Chapter V to contribute significantly to explanations of akrasia. The moral akrasiac can interpret situations and the alternative courses of action they offer in moral terms, but this moral interpretation is seen for various reasons as less attractive motivationally than a non-moral interpretation, and consequently the normative pressure of moral language does not affect his final decision or action. It was also argued that the prescriptive and persuasive functions of moral language were influential in the development of values and attitudes.

Two main, interrelated questions arise from this analysis with reference to anti-akrasiac methods of moral education. Firstly, how should children be exposed to the prescriptive and persuasive functions of moral language, and secondly why does the moral language which children learn not always "bite" upon their behaviour?

The first question again raises the paradox mentioned in the previous section. Prescriptive language and the moral expectations it conveys can militate against the open acknowledgment of one's actual wants and motives, yet it also seems to play an essential part in the formation of personal values. A child, for example, could hardly come to believe that stealing

was wrong without learning to associate the concept of stealing (as distinct from borrowing, buying, being given, etc.) with expressions of disapproval, and without experiencing or hearing of situations described to him as exemplifying "stealing", in which efforts are made to redress the wrong in some way (e.g. by catching and punishing the thief, getting the money back, preventing further thefts, etc.); yet, on the other hand, the moral taboo which he learns by these means to attach to the concept of stealing could well inhibit him from recognising, examining and thereby perhaps modifying his desire on a particular occasion to take for himself something that does not belong to him.

Some attempt was made to resolve this apparent paradox in the previous section by noting that moral prescriptions can be more or less realistic, and that over-censorious expectations can lead merely to Benson's "self-castigation". The way in which moral prescriptions are formulated and presented to children, however, is probably an even more important factor. Simply to expose the child to prescriptive moral language is clearly not sufficient to ensure his adoption of and compliance with the values so prescribed; this point was noted in the objections to exhortation and preaching in Section 3 and need not be laboured further. Some link between the prescriptions and the child's existing wants, dispositions and motives must be established if he is to adopt the values implicit in the moral language to which he is being exposed.

Such links could take various forms. An obvious source of motivation in the earlier stages of development will be the desire to gain the approval or avoid the disapproval of the prescriber, either because of a positive liking or respect for him

as a person, or because of the rewards and punishments which he can bestow. Later on, use can be made of the adolescent's capacity for compassion and social awareness; as most moral concepts relate in some way to the interests of others, any activities which help children to develop inter-personal understanding, concern and empathy (e.g. "communal" or "co-operative" activities) should tend to narrow the possible gap between justificatory and motivational considerations in moral decision-making and moral action. A linguistic framework of moral concepts can thus be built up which crystallises the child's evaluative attitudes and which he can use to interpret situations that he meets. This framework should help both to produce consistency of judgment and, if the appropriate motivational links are established, to generate habitual forms of behaviour which will provide a further defence against akrasia.

The achievement of this state of moral equilibrium, however, is by no means assured by the mere process of linguistic development, and the second, related question must now be asked: why does the moral language which children learn not always "bite" upon their behaviour?

Part of the answer has already been suggested, i.e. the failure to establish and develop motivational links with what is prescribed. Other possibilities were discussed when the language factor was examined in Chapter V, notably:-

a) a failure to concentrate sufficiently upon the moral interpretation of a situation because of the strength of countervailing factors;

and b) a failure to present the moral interpretation to oneself

> attractively enough, either because one wants it to have a reduced motivational effect, or because the particular moral interpretation which is adopted does not in fact have much motivational appeal.

Educational examples of these possibilities were also given in Chapter V.

The methodological implications here are reasonably clear. A framework of moral language, it was argued in Chapter V, has to be imposed upon a situation before moral principles can be seen to be applicable to it, but moral concepts are not directly identifiable, self-evident elements in our experience of situations. If follows, then, that there will be considerable scope for straightforward teaching and discussion about the interpretation of situations in terms of moral concepts and principles. With young children, the aim will be to teach that there *is* a non-obvious, moral interpretation of a situation (e.g. that picking apples off a tree can constitute "stealing", if the tree is in somebody else's garden and no permission has been given to take the fruit). With older children, *alternative* moral interpretations can be discussed and the possible conflict of principles demonstrated (e.g. that cheating in a test could be interpreted as deceiving the teacher, trying to gain an unfair advantage over one's classmates, or trying to satisfy the aspirations of proud parents). Exploring such questions verbally should at least help children to see situations in terms of moral concepts and principles, and to compare alternative interpretations.

These methods do not, however, necessarily solve the motivational problem of how to make the moral interpretation of a situation attractive enough to outweigh non-moral considerations,

or in other words how to convey the seriousness and authority of a moral judgment. A child who seriously believes that he ought to do y (in the sense elaborated throughout this study), yet who for situational, non-moral reasons wants to do x more, must somehow be brought to recognise that his "ought"-judgment, though not compatible with his immediate wants, is backed by considerations which he regards as justificatory and therefore binding upon him as a moral agent. What methods are most likely to be helpful here?

Teaching the form of moral thinking, as described in A (ii), in such a way that children will want to "get it right" and not make procedural or logical mistakes could help them to feel the force of justificatory reasons more strongly. Also an examination of the phenomenology of conscience might show children that acting against what they sincerely believe they ought to do must bring with it some form of retribution, such as anxiety, worry, embarrassment, remorse or self-reproach. Perhaps example, though, can have the greatest effect, for by observing the consistent behaviour of an adult who acts in accordance with his principles despite the influence of situational, countervailing factors, children may learn more than by direct teaching. "Example-following" as an anti-akrasiac method is not without its drawbacks, as described in B, (ii), but these can be overcome to some extent if the exemplar makes clear what his moral beliefs are, why he holds them, and how he applies them in a particular situation, especially if the exemplar's aim is not to convince his followers of the validity of his beliefs but of the importance that he attaches to acting upon them because he accepts them as valid.

This method will probably be more applicable outside than inside the classroom, although a teacher can effectively demonstrate how he acts upon his beliefs in the way that he treats his pupils and organises his class; parents and other adults who have less formal contact with children, however, will have more opportunities of acting as anti-akrasiac exemplars. One further methodological implication for the schoolteacher is that "neutrally-chaired discussion" by definition rules out the example-following method; if a teacher consistently refuses to declare his own beliefs (other than that he believes he ought not to declare his beliefs in such discussions), he can provide no example of what it is to act upon one's beliefs.

The two main methodological questions arising from a consideration of the language factor, therefore, suggest that a variety of approaches will be needed to combat this aspect of akrasia. Interestingly, not all of these approaches fall within the "verbal" category of the typology, and the interrelationship of the "verbal" and the "practical" will be discussed further in the concluding general remarks.

(iii) The Immediacy Factor

This factor was shown in Chapter V to have various types of connection with various types of akrasia, which can be summarised as follows:

a) Prudential akrasia is characterised by a preference for present, immediate considerations over future, remote ones. In a conflict between present and future wants the scales are tipped in favour of the former, because of the psychological

and logical difficulties of "identifying" with one's "future self".

b) Some, but not all, cases of moral akrasia reveal a similar preference for the immediate over the remote in either a temporal or a geographical sense.

c) More generally, the justificatory reasons and principles which the moral akrasiac acknowledges but fails to act upon lack the immediacy, specificity and first-handness of the countervailing factors which are an immediately identifiable element in the situation confronting the agent, and which consequently at the time of his decision and/or action loom the largest.

d) While the prudential akrasiac fails to "identify" with his "future self", the moral akrasiac typically fails to "identify" with the interests of others, which lack the first-hand immediacy of his own interests.

Some of the implications of the above points for the development of an anti-akrasiac methodology have already been noted in (i) and (ii). The problem of getting children to identify with others and to develop insight into and concern for their interests, wants and points of view has already been discussed at a number of points within this chapter, as have methods of increasing the motivational potency of justificatory reasons and principles.

Other methodological approaches, however, are also suggested by the immediacy factor which have not yet been fully explored. The conflict between present and future considerations, for example, which occurs in prudential and, to a lesser extent,

in moral akrasia, suggests that instruction and discussion concerned with the prediction of consequences may be helpful in focussing children's attention upon future possibilities and probabilities and thus reducing to some degree the apparent remoteness of such considerations; the ability to predict is also a necessary element in rational decision-making, for decisions concern actions to be taken in the future for reasons which relate in part to probable future consequences.

Some educational materials have been specifically designed to develop the skills and habits associated with prediction (e.g. the Lifeline unit on "Consequences" which "puts the emphasis on improving boys' and girls' ability to predict the possible and probable consequences of actions.")[54] The main difficulty in such work, if intended as anti-akrasiac, will be to avoid the impression of "mere theorising" and to convey the idea that some future states of affairs can be predicted and will in time become present states of affairs. One useful technique might therefore be to work backwards from present events to elucidate their aetiology and to determine the extent to which they were in fact predictable. Psychological factors would have to be taken into account in the use of such methods for clearly their effectiveness will depend upon the child having acquired, at least at a rudimentary level, the concepts of time, of cause and of effect.

The choice of materials to be used in such methods raises further issues which relate more generally to the immediacy factor and which centre around the hallowed educational adage, "Start from the known and proceed to the unknown". Does the

immediacy factor suggest that any particular type of issue or situation, if discussed by children, is most likely to increase the impact of temporally or geographically remote considerations?

It would seem to be a reasonable assumption that, initially at least, the more familiar the situation discussed is to the children, the easier will it be for them to make predictions or decisions about it, or suggest prior causes of it, and the tighter will appear the connections between what they do now and what the effect of their actions and decisions will be in the future. Discussion with a young child about what is likely to happen if he forgets to feed his pet rabbit, or with older children about the possible results of making do with a bag of chips instead of a proper school lunch, is more likely to bring home the relevance of future considerations to present decisions and actions than is a discussion of the effects of an Oxfam project in Bangladesh. The problem of identification is similarly eased if reference is made to familiar situations which the child has actually experienced. Not only is it more difficult to appreciate the effects of subscribing to Oxfam than of forgoing school lunches; it is also more difficult to identify with a starving child in Bangladesh (because of the lack of any appropriate personal experience) than with a school friend who has a weight problem. As Hume noted, "We sympathise more with persons contiguous to us, than with persons remote from us; with our acquaintances than with strangers; with our countrymen than with foreigners."[55] The best starting-points, then, would appear to be situations with which the child is directly familiar, with which he can sympathetically identify, and where he can readily

be made to feel that the future consequences of present actions and decisions matter.

Even discussion of familiar situations, however, must necessarily be hypothetical and non-immediate in as much as the child is at that point engaged in the discussion and not in the actual situation under discussion. As was argued in Section 3, A, (ii), the motivational effect of situational factors cannot be fully experienced "second-hand", and consequently predictions or decisions made about hypothetical situations, however familiar, will have a different logical status from those made in the situation itself.

It follows, then, that "practical" methods will have an important contribution to make in connection with the immediacy factor, for the only way to avoid the hypothetical features inherent in discussions about consequences is to provide children with direct experience of real situations which require predictions or decisions to be made. A number of the "practical" methods noted in the typology could be of use in this respect. Role-play approximates more closely to actual, situational experience than does mere discussion, but for the reasons given in Section 3, B, (iii), is still necessarily hypothetical. All of the "disciplined activities" could provide direct experience of situations requiring prediction or decision; "sporting" and "co-operative" activities offer the widest scope, for competitive games like rugger and co-operative, physical projects like rock-climbing, if undertaken seriously and intelligently, are virtually constituted by a succession of predictions and decisions which determine the direction and pattern of the activity.

"Individual" activities offer another approach to the immediacy problem, particularly in connection with geographical remoteness. Milgram's work, referred to in Chapter V, suggests (as does common sense) that in some situations of moral dilemma and temptation the countervailing factors and justificatory reasons carry weight with the agent in proportion to their relative geographical immediacy; so, in the example discussed in Section 1 of this chapter, the young child who is tempted to climb on to a stool to reach a tin of sweets, though believing he ought not to do so, is more likely to opt for the immediate attractions of the sweets if his mother (representing the justificatory reasons for not climbing on to the stool) is out of the house, than if she is near at hand.

Geographical remoteness of this kind can be countered by the development of qualities like "trustworthiness" and "reliability", which imply some form of internalised control upon the child's behaviour. Thus, in the example of the Gordonstoun training plan already quoted, "an essential feature lay in the fact that each boy was trusted to fill in the chart conscientiously each evening, (and) there was no check to ensure that correct answers were recorded."[56] This kind of training will clearly be a gradual business. The teacher or parent who is aiming to develop "trustworthiness" in his children and to reduce the need for him to be physically present at all times in order to ensure the influence of justificatory reasons will not achieve much by absenting himself for hours and just hoping for the best; he will be more likely to encourage the qualities that he wants to develop in the children by setting realistic yet increasingly demanding

tasks for which the children recognise that there are justificatory reasons, but where the geographical remoteness of the adult's reinforcement allows them to feel the pull of countervailing factors. Allowing children in school increasing responsibility for marking some of their own work would be another means of habituating them to become less dependent upon direct supervision when implementing a justificatory principle (i.e. it's best to mark honestly because help cannot be given unless individual difficulties are admitted.)

Another "practical" approach to the development of "self-control" in children is suggested by a further aspect of the immediacy factor. Empirical studies indicate that there is a connection between being able to resist temptation and being able to delay the gratification of one's desires and impulses (e.g. by choosing a delayed, larger reward rather than a smaller, immediate one.)[57] Although these empirical findings, which reflect some of the logical points already made in connection with the immediacy factor, do not necessarily mean that akrasia is partly caused by having a particular conception of time and of the future, there is at least an indication that methods aiming to extend such conceptions in children might help them to act upon their beliefs in certain circumstances. Rewards and punishments seem the most obviously useful method in this respect. Not giving young children immediately everything that they want, rewarding them for waiting and being patient, and punishing them for self-centred impatience are all possible ways of helping them to delay the gratification of their immediate desires.

At a more general level, and with children of school

age, a contribution to "delayed gratification" may be made by the study of "non-moral" curriculum subjects. Learning a subject like Science or Maths or History or Latin requires self-discipline and patience; problems have to be pondered, evidence considered, facts and factors weighed, and objections and anomalies taken account of, for rushed answers and hurried conclusions are unlikely to be sound ones. Intellectual values and principles resemble moral ones in being often at variance with the agent's immediate wants and impulses, and consequently learning to abide by the principles and rules of procedure embodied in the discipline of a subject may not be unconnected with learning to abide by moral principles.

"Practical" and "verbal" methods of dealing with the immediacy factor in akrasiac behaviour will need to be used in combination if they are to achieve any success. The relationship between "practical" and "verbal" methods will be further considered in the more general conclusions to follow, but the point to note here is that activities like playing cricket, rock-climbing, and marking one's own work will not in themselves necessarily increase the motivational influence of justificatory considerations which are temporally, geographically or logically "non-immediate". Instruction and discussion about how these considerations may be seen as justificatory and about the difficulties created by their "non-immediacy" will also be needed to prepare for and to follow the actual situational experience. This in turn raises many of the issues already discussed in connection with the honesty and language factors - a further indication that the three factors must be seen as closely interrelated, both in their theoretical, explanatory role and in their practical, methodological implications.

B. Some General Conclusions

Anti-akrasiac methods have now been explored from two different directions. In Section 3 a typology of "ways of teaching morality" was presented, in which each method was separately scrutinised for its anti-akrasiac strengths and weaknesses, while in this Section the three logical "factors" of akrasia, suggested and described in Chapter V, have been examined for their methodological implications. These two approaches have yielded substantial results, which have however of necessity taken the form of concentrated, uni-dimensional appraisals of individual methods. It remains, therefore, briefly to draw a few more generalised and synthesised conclusions from the specific points which have been made.

(i) The multi-factorial nature of akrasia and the consequent need for a combination of methods to combat it has been emphasised throughout this chapter. Akrasia results from a particular relationship between judgment and action, and the most successful combinations of anti-akrasiac methods will need to pay attention to both sides of that relationship. The distinction between "verbal" and "practical" methods, though less sharp in practice than the categories of the typology might suggest, reflects to some extent the judgmental and behavioural aspects of akrasia. But just as akrasia cannot be interpreted simply as a case of either "misjudgment" or "misbehaviour", so can it not be combatted by either a predominantly "verbal" or a predominantly "practical" approach. Constant interaction is needed between practical experience on the one hand and linguistic commentaries upon that experience on the other.

(ii) The akrasiac fails to act upon his beliefs that certain reasons and principles are justificatory. But as was noted in Chapter II, although the logical essence of akrasia may be thought of as a failure to translate one's principles into action, it does not necessarily follow that moral learning and development conform psychologically and chronologically to a "two-stage" model (i.e. of first acquiring principles and then putting them into practice by applying them to particular situations.)

As I have argued elsewhere,[58] the model of "principle-application" though reflecting a possible logical priority of principles over situations is less applicable to the psychological priorities involved in children's moral learning. As far as moral development is concerned, it could well be that principles can only be derived and learnt from particular cases and situations, which are thus in a sense "prior" to the principles. It is difficult to see how a child could arrive at and accept a justificatory principle without having first experienced situations to which that principle could be applied.

It is also arguable whether general principles have even a clear-cut logical priority over particular cases, as Hirst claims for example.[59] Logical interdependence may be a more helpful notion than logical priority in this respect, for moral principles and moral situations acquire their meaning and qualify as "moral" by virtue of their mutual relationship. The principle of truth-telling, for instance, can only be understood as a moral principle by reference to actual situations in which a decision has to be made either to tell the truth or to lie, and conversely such situations can only be understood as moral situations if it

is recognised that moral principles are relevant to them. Actual situational experience, then, and the applying of principles are best seen as logically interdependent elements in moral judgment and action.

Children, therefore, can only learn justificatory principles in the context of direct, situational experience, in which explanation is given of how the particular principle is relevant. The principle of respect for others' property, for example, can be learnt by a child only as a result of experiences such as losing one's school cap, being tempted to take someone else's cap to replace it, being punished for taking it, etc. which are supplemented by verbal teaching and linguistic commentaries showing how these experiences are related to justificatory principles.

This interdependence of principles and experience adds further weight to the argument in (i) in favour of constant interaction between "verbal" and "practical" methods of combatting akrasia. Situational experience of problems and dilemmas, and participation in activities, which can be previously or subsequently discussed, examined, interpreted, explained, criticised and evaluated through the medium of moral language will at least take some account of the complex logical and psychological features of akrasia.

(iii) Because the akrasiac wants to do what he does more than what he believes he ought to do, anti-akrasiac methods must pay particular attention to the development and modification of children's wants. The typology of methods in Section 3

suggested that a sequential programme might be devised in this connection which would closely follow Kohlberg's account of motivational levels. Thus, rewards and punishments would be used with young children to encourage them to want to do what they might otherwise not want to do; at the next stage more use would be made of the child's desire for adult and peer-group approval, his tendency to follow examples, and his increasing ability to "identify" and empathise with others; and finally the attitudes and beliefs so acquired might be systematised into a framework of more abstract, justifying principles, incorporated in an autonomous, "rational" conscience. Habit-formation of some kind would be the aim at each stage, and extrinsic forms of motivation would give way to intrinsic ones as the child came to want to do what he believed he ought to do because he so believed rather than because of external sanctions.

Such a programme recalls and gives some content to Aristotle's dictum concerning the role of habituation in moral learning: "... it is a matter of real importance whether our early education confirms us in one set of habits or another,"[60] - and also to Bradley's account:

> "The child is taught to will a content which is universal and good, and he learns to identify his will with it, so that he feels pleasure when he feels himself in accord with it, uneasiness or pain when his will is contrary thereto, and he feels that it is contrary. This is the beginning of personal morality ..."[61]

Acting as a result of an acquired habit, or even principle, suggests a certain lack of reflection and deliberation at the time of the action,[62] which could constitute an advantage rather than a disadvantage in potentially akrasiac situations.

The longer a child (or an adult) thinks about the pros and cons of acting as he believes he ought in a particular situation, the more he may dwell upon the attractions of the countervailing factors and the more heavily they may weigh with him. Habits, then, can serve a useful anti-akrasiac purpose in cutting short deliberation and initiating action before the allure of counter-inclinations becomes too great, while principles can do a similar job by providing a summary moral justification for a course of action which can be implemented before non-moral considerations pose any great threat of temptation.

(iv) Moral education has been interpreted deliberately widely in this Chapter as any activity or process which is implicitly or explicitly directed towards influencing young people's moral thinking, beliefs and behaviour. One result of this has been that the methods discussed have not been restricted to school activities, nor to structured, teaching programmes. The question remains, however, whether the best context for anti-akrasiac methods is likely to be found in timetabled "moral education" lessons, or in the general life and organisation of the school, or in non-school activities and experiences. Each of the three contexts seems able to contribute something of value.

"Moral education" lessons in school are probably the best way of dealing systematically and thoroughly with features of moral discourse and the methodology of moral reasoning. The fact that school time is allocated to teaching and discussion about moral questions should also emphasise their seriousness and complexity. One danger of this approach, however, is that it may imply that "morality" is "done" at certain times of the week, like history or geography, and if this impression is given, akrasia

may even be encouraged as a result of increasing the apparent remoteness of "what we talk about in Moral Education" from "what happens in real life". Less formally structured school activities and experiences reduce this risk, though at the cost of providing a less comprehensive, explicit treatment of moral questions. Games, clubs, societies, projects, rituals, traditions and the every day interpersonal transactions which go to make up the life and ethos of a school provide opportunities for every kind of anti-akrasiac method, and what is taught and learnt by these means stands a good chance of becoming internalised in the form of habits, for these transactions are not "mere talk" but constitute a large part of schoolchildren's daily life. For many children, however, "real life" starts at the school gates, and if anti-akrasiac methods are to have any effect on children's behaviour out of school, they will obviously need some reinforcement in out-of-school situations, particularly in the home.

Probably more important, though, than whether anti-akrasiac methods are used formally or informally, or in or out of school, is whether or not they form a consistent pattern of social learning and experience, the continuity of which encourages identification, example-following and habit-formation. This point will be developed further in (v).

(v) Two apparently conflicting views of morality, the "competitive" and the "conformist", were sketched in Chapter II. The account of moral judgment and action in general, and of akrasia in particular, which was then presented had more in common with the "competitive" model, which it was argued reflected various logical features of morality which in turn allowed for

the logical possibility of akrasia.

But although most moral concepts derive their logical point from the presupposition that the moral life is difficult to lead, it does not follow that one learns psychologically to lead this life through a process of constant struggle. Difficult skills are not acquired, nor difficult tasks achieved, by letting one's mind dwell at the outset on the magnitude of the problems and obstacles, or by setting oneself objectives which one will in all probability fail to attain. Success is more likely to result if one concentrates first upon the easier components of the skills to be acquired, practises these until they become "second nature", and builds upon them to achieve further, more difficult, but still realistic goals. One does not learn how to climb the south-west face of Everest by trying to climb the south-west face of Everest.

Similarly, one does not learn to combat akrasia by being faced initially with a stark conflict between obligation and inclination, and by trying, in Benson's words, "to beat the passions into submission in the interests of morality". Children learn the initial requirements of morality by learning to behave in ways which please others whom they wish to please and which consequently please themselves; they acquire habits because they want to acquire them, not because they have struggled to subdue their wants in favour of something which they do not want. Moral learning, then, (which includes learning to do what one believes one ought to do) resembles in its psychological features the "conformist" rather than the "competitive" model, particularly in the early stages when young children are unable to appreciate the impersonal nature of justificatory reasons and principles,

whose logical features help to produce the characteristically "moral" conflict between duty and desire. Young children become aware of moral demands through the personal mediation of adult prescriptions, and they learn to conform to (at least some of) these demands because of benefits and satisfactions which accrue to them as a result; they become moral beings by gradually conforming to social expectations rather than by fighting constant and lonely battles against temptation and inclination.

If moral learning and development, therefore, reflects the "conformist" model in these respects, a final and important general implication for anti-akrasiac methods will follow. To be effective, such methods will have to be viewed and practised not as a particular set of educational techniques designed to achieve a specific, limited goal within "moral education", but rather as an integral and constitutive element in the social traditions within which the child is growing up. Habits are formed, examples followed, and identifications made most easily within a social form of life which allows continuity and consistency of experience and also predictability of expectations. Participation in a variety of social institutions, then, such as school, the youth club, the sports club, the church, Cubs and Brownies, Scouts and Guides etc. will provide opportunities for "verbal" exhortation and preaching, instruction and discussion to interact with "practical" experience of rewards and punishments, example-following and "disciplined" activities, as described in Section 3, for such institutions are characterised by particular procedures, values and goals which are communicated to new members and reinforced for existing members by this inter-

action of the "verbal" and the "practical". If the child is made to feel a real member of such social institutions, and if within that institutional context adults deliberately expose him to the kind of linguistic and situational experience which has been discussed in this chapter, little more can be done to "strengthen his will".

This chapter has attempted to relate the account of akrasia, developed in Chapters II - V, to the issue of moral education. It was argued in Section 1 that children as well as adults can be akrasiac, and that part of the function of moral education must therefore be to help children to act upon their beliefs. In Section 2 it was shown how approaches to moral education in general and to combatting akrasia in particular must necessarily reflect particular views of the nature of morality and of the explanation of akrasia. The account of morality and of akrasia given in Chapters II - V was then used in Section 3 as a basis for evaluating on logical grounds the likely strengths and weaknesses of various "ways of teaching morality" as methods of combatting akrasia. Finally in Section 4 some suggestions, both specific and general, about anti-akrasiac methods have been made, drawn from the previous section and also from the logical features central to the account of akrasia which has been presented in this study.

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34. see e.g. Bailey, C., "Teaching by Discussion and the Neutral Teacher" in Proceedings of the Philosophy of Education Society of Gt. Britain, VII, 1, pp.26-38, and Elliott, J., "Neutrality, Rationality and the Role of the Teacher", in same issue, pp.39-65.

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39. ibid, p.44.

40. ibid, pp.60-1.

41. ibid, p.61.

42. ibid, p.48.

43. This point was suggested to me by Dr. Helen Freeman at a research seminar.

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